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A critical analysis of Christian responses to Islamic claims about the work of the Prophet Muhammad, 'the Messenger of God'.

William Thomas Long, 1993

ABSTRACT

The aims of this study are to analyse critically the different Christian responses to the Islamic understanding of the work of Muḥammad.

Chapter one consists a short introduction leading to an appraisal of Muḥammad which incorporates historical, hagiographical and Quranic source material, and in the light of relevant Christian and Muslim scholarship. The second chapter presents a summary critical analysis of Muḥammad in Christian theological perspective, from 661 A.D. to modern times.

Chapter three presents a critique of Christian responses to the Muslim allegations that the text of the Bible has been infected with corruption; and that Muḥammad's advent and status are foretold in the 'unadulterated' scriptures, and in the Gospel of Barnabas. Chapter four examines the theological significance of the work of Muḥammad for Christians. Thus, Jesus and Muḥammad are critically assessed and contrasted in order to ascertain the importance, for Christians, of the Muslim claims in respect of Muḥammad as 'the messenger of God'.

Chapter five provides a critical evaluation of the various Christian responses to Muḥammad. It is argued that many of the said responses have been entangled in myths and misperceptions which have severely distorted the true account of Muḥammad's work. Consequently, many Christians have failed to appreciate the divine legitimacy of Muḥammad's call

to prophethood. Further, it is argued that Christians should accept that Muhammad is a genuine prophet, and the messenger of God. However, Muhammad's use of the power-structure in order to maintain Islam is in sharp contrast to Jesus' decision to face the consequences of his ministry passively through faith in God. Accordingly, orthodox Christian belief in the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus provides another dimension to prophethood, where the messenger and the message become one, an identification which finds no parallel in Islam, and which, in the nature of the case, cannot find a parallel.

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF CHRISTIAN RESPONSES TO ISLAMIC CLAIMS
ABOUT THE WORK OF THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD, 'THE MESSENGER OF
GOD'

WILLIAM THOMAS LONG, 1993

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UNIVERSITY OF DURHAM

DEPARTMENT OF THEOLOGY

1993



A critical analysis of Christian responses to Islamic claims about the work of the Prophet Muhammad, 'the Messenger of God'.

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Notes on the Transliteration of Arabic Words

The system of transliteration is the same as that found in the Encyclopaedia of Islam with the following modifications:

th becomes th

dj becomes j

k becomes q.

Abbreviations

- AQ A. Yūsuf ‘Alī, The Holy Qur’ān, Text, Translation and Commentary. 1st published, 1934; new edn., Leicester, Islamic Foundation, 1975.
- CAF Cragg, K., The Christ and the Faiths: Theology in Cross-Reference. S.P.C.K., London, 1986
- CTM Cragg, K., The Call of the Minaret. 1st published, 1956; 2nd revised edn., Collins, London, 1985.
- ECI Gaudeul, J.-M., Encounters and Clashes: Islam and Christianity in History, 2 Vols. Pontificio Istituto di Studi Arabi e Islamici, Rome, 1984.
- GBT Ragg, L. and L., (Trans.), The Gospel of Barnabas. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1907.
- ICT Sweetman, J.W., Islam and Christian Theology. Lutterworth Press, London, part 1, vol. 1, 1945.
- IWI Daniel, N.A., Islam and the West: The Making of an Image. Edinburgh University Press, 1960.
- JCT Macquarrie, J., Jesus Christ in Modern Thought. S.C.M. Press, London, 1990.
- JDI Sahas, D.J., John of Damascus on Islam, the "heresy of the Ishmaelites". Brill, Leiden, 1972.
- JME Cragg, K., Jesus and the Muslim - An Exploration. George Allen and Unwin, London, 1985.
- JPG Casey, M., From Jewish Prophet to Gentile God: The Origins and Development of New Testament Christology. James Clarke, Cambridge, 1991.

- JTU Vermes, G., Jesus the Jew. 1st published, 1973; 2nd edn., S.C.M. Press, London, 1983.
- MAM Robson J., (Trans.), Mishkāt Al-Masābīh, English Translation with Explanatory Notes. Kashmiri Bazar, Lahore, 1975.
- MCE Watt, W.M., Muslim-Christian Encounters: Perceptions and Misperceptions. Routledge, London, 1991.
- MPS Watt, W.M., Muhammad, Prophet and Statesman. 1st published, 1961; Oxford University Press, 1964.
- MTG Cragg, K., Muhammad and the Christian. Darton, Longman and Todd, London, 1984.
- PVI Kritzeck, J., Peter the Venerable and Islam. Princeton University Press, 1964.
- Q al-Qur'ān
- RLB Peers, E.A., Ramon Lull: A Biography. S.P.C.K., London, 1929.
- RM Rodinson, M., Mohammed. 1st published in English, 1971; Pelican Books, 1983.
- RSV The Holy Bible: Revised Standard Version. Collins, Glasgow, O.T., 1952; N.T., 2nd edn., 1971.
- TLM Ibn Ishāq, M., The Life of Muhammad. Trans., Guillaume, A., 1955; 3rd impression, O.U.P., Pakistan, 1970.
- UDN Dunn, J.D.G., Unity and Diversity in the New Testament: Enquiry into the Character of Earliest Christianity. 1st published, 1981; revised edn., S.C.M. Press, London, 1990.

WGO O'Shaughnessy, T.J., Word of God in the Qur'ān. 1st published as The Koranic Concept of the Word of God, 1948; revised edn., Biblical Institute Press, Rome, 1984.

INTRODUCTION

Scope, Limits, and Method of the Study

The substance and argument of this thesis is predicated on the theistic hope that all things are in unison with God's creative purposes. But can those creative purposes be comprehended by the human mind? Perhaps they can only be taken on the trust, in the manner of an Abraham, or Jesus, or Muḥammad.

From the orthodox Christian perspective, there is a continuity between Abraham and Jesus. The Christian belief in the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus represents the essence of the theistic hope. In other words, it is the Christian claim that God was in Christ in a way that denotes a unique, final and universal divine message to mankind.

On the other hand, the Muslim perception of the theistic hope is grounded in the belief that the message proclaimed by Muḥammad was from the true divine source, and in continuity, not only with Abraham, but also with Jesus. The Qur'ān portrays Muḥammad as, 'the Seal of the Prophets' (Qur'ān 33:40). According to Muslims, Jesus was a precursor of Muḥammad, and even a witness to him.

The aims of this thesis are to examine critically the various Christian responses to the claims forwarded by Muslims with regard to the divine legitimacy, finality and universality of the work of Muḥammad, and to determine if the Muslim claims in question can find any echo in Christian faith and experience.

An account of Muḥammad and the rise of Islam is furnished by Chapter one. Chapter two provides a critique of Muḥammad in Christian theological perspective within the limits of Christian responses to Muḥammad from 661 A.D. until

modern times; and a critical analysis of Christian appraisals of the significance of the Scriptures, as perceived by Muslims in respect of Muḥammad, prescribe the limits of Chapter three. The question of the theological significance of Muḥammad's life and work for Christians, in the light of the Christ-event, is the specific focus of debate contained in Chapter four. Therefore, the said chapters dictate, not only the prescribed areas of research, but also the method employed to answer the ultimate question raised by this thesis, namely, Is there something in the person, the message, the ministry, and the witness of Muḥammad which can make its appeal to Christians as well as to Muslims?

The following points may be noted at the outset.

Firstly, the dates which occur in the course of the text are given anno domini. However, the dates of books published in the Arab World are given as after the hijrah (A.H.).

Secondly, it is assumed that 'God' and 'Allāh' are words which refer to the supreme Being at the centre of both Christianity and Islam. Arabic speaking Jews and Christians do, in fact, use 'Allāh' for 'God'. Hence, in the course of this thesis, 'God' and 'Allāh' are used interchangeably in relation to the subject matter of the text. Needless to say, the dual usage of 'God' and 'Allāh' in no way implies that the Christian and Islamic understanding of the nature of God are one and the same. The nature of God, as perceived by both Christians and Muslims, will be explored in the course of this thesis.

Thirdly, all quotations from the Qur'ān are taken from, A. Yūsuf 'Alī, The Holy Qur'ān, Text, Translation and Commentary. 1st published, 1934; new edn., Leicester, Islamic Foundation, 1975.

All quotations from the Bible are taken from The Holy Bible: Revised Standard Version. Glasgow, Collins, O.T., 1952; N.T., 2nd edn., 1971.

CHAPTER ONE

MUHAMMAD AND THE RISE OF ISLAM

Section 1.1: Arabia in the 'Days of Ignorance' (al-jāhiliya)

Early in the seventh century of the Christian era the Arabian peninsula witnessed the rise of a religious movement that was destined to influence a large section of mankind. This religious movement was called Islam. H.A.R. Gibb, commenting on this point, states:

...The word Islam, finally adopted by Mohammed as the distinctive name of the faith which he preached, means 'submitting oneself or one's person to God'. The adherent of Islam is usually designated by the corresponding adjective Muslim.¹

At the present time, 1993, there are over forty-five Muslim nations in the world, and the total population of Muslims is more than a billion. In other words, approximately one fifth of the world's population adheres to the Islamic confession of faith, namely, the Shahādah. It states:

...I bear witness that there is no god but God and that Muḥammad is the Messenger of God.²

Accordingly, Muḥammad is honoured by Muslims as the last and greatest of God's messengers sent to mankind. From the Muslim perspective, Muḥammad is above criticism and any attempt to belittle the Prophet of Islam will be vehemently opposed. In this regard, Smith comments:

...to disparage Muḥammad will provoke even the most 'liberal' sections of the (Muslim) community to fanaticism and blazing violence.³

Yet, the early history of the Arabs is obscure. Presumably, they originated⁴ in the Arabian peninsula at some stage in

the distant past. In this connection, Rodinson states:

...The people known at this period in Greek as 'Sarakenoi', 'Saraceni' in Latin, from which we get our modern English word, 'Saracens', had previously been called 'Scenite Arabs', the Arabs who dwell in tents (from the Greek skene, a tent). They called themselves simply Arabs. They had lived in that arid land since time immemorial.⁵

Further, the people of Arabia, before the rise of Islam, are divided by national tradition into two main sections, the northern and the southern. All in all, the people of the north embraced a nomadic way of life; the southerners, in contrast, developed a more settled, urban civilisation.

Prior to the advent of Muḥammad, Arabia was entangled in the complex political and economic affairs of the world in that age. The empires of Byzantium and Persia were at war with each other in the quest for world supremacy. These empires also tried to hold sway over Arabia, but the ongoing war effort, compounded by internal troubles in both Byzantium and Persia, prevented them from gaining any measure of control over the affairs of Arabia.⁶ At the beginning of the seventh century the Arabian peninsula was a comparatively poor area. Only two places, Yathrib (now Medina) situated in western Arabia, and Mecca a commercial centre some thirty miles inland from the Red Sea port of Jedda, were of any importance. Through Mecca passed the camel caravans carrying merchandise between Yemen in the south and Syria in the north. Yathrib was the point at which some travellers branched off north-east.

The history of Arabia, from the Islamic viewpoint, is divided into two stages. According to Muslims, the call of Muḥammad to prophethood is the all important factor which divides the history of Arabia into two distinct stages. That is to say, the age prior to the mission of Muḥammad is designated as al-jāhilīya (the days of ignorance of Islam) and the age which

follows as that of the renewal of Islam (submission). The term al-jāhiliya does not mean 'pre-Islamic'. After all, from the Islamic perspective, Abraham was a Muslim as was Iṣma'īl (Ishmael) who lived in Arabia.⁷ Therefore, al-jāhiliya should be understood as being the age of forgetfulness expressed in the ethical barbarism⁸ against which Muḥammad directs his preaching in Mecca and Medina. This age of barbarism and ignorance is considered by Muslims as a time characterised by unbelief, idolatry, pride, cruelty and revenge.⁹ In short, the age in question was an era far removed from the example of Abraham who, according to the Qur'ān, was 'tender-hearted, forbearing.'¹⁰ The pagan Arabs did, however, have a number of religious notions and customs. In general, the said Arabs propitiated tribal and local deities, and these deities were linked with definite places of worship or objects of nature. The three principal deities of the pagan Arabs were goddesses known as al-Lāt, al-'Uzzā and al-Manāt.¹¹ The Arabs were already familiar with a superior deity called Allāh. In popular opinion the above mentioned goddesses were referred to as Allāh's daughters.¹² In the time of Muḥammad the Meccans regarded the goddess al-'Uzzā as of special importance.¹³ The response of the pagan Arabs to these goddesses is severely criticised in the Qur'ān.¹⁴ However, alongside the polytheistic practices under review, the pagan Arabs had, as stated above, some understanding of Allāh as a superior deity.¹⁵ Still, they approached Allāh only under extreme circumstances. Moreover, it appears that some of the said Arabs ascribed to Allāh the term abtar (childless)¹⁶; and, according to Winnett:

...the use of the term as applied to Allāh may well be supplied by Sūrah 112: 'Say, Allāh is one; Allāh is eternal. He did not beget, and He was not begotten. And no one is comparable to Him.' Mohammed may be here reflecting a bit of pre-islamic theology about Allāh.¹⁷

In any case, it is important to note that the message conveyed by Muḥammad, in respect of Allāh's sovereignty, did not necessitate the naming of a 'new' deity.

Furthermore, the pagan Arabs made pilgrimages to shrines at various locations in Arabia. Undoubtedly, the most important shrine was the rectangular stone building in the valley of Mecca, known as the Ka'bah. According to Islamic tradition, the foundation of the Ka'bah goes back to Abraham.¹⁸ The major god associated with the Ka'bah was Hubal. Hubal, a male god, appears to have occupied a position of importance within the religious notions of the pagan Arabs. When the Quraish¹⁹ occupied Mecca, each clan was permitted to erect its own deity in the holy precincts of the Ka'bah. Later on when Muḥammad re-entered Mecca he immediately purified the Ka'bah and destroyed all the pagan idols.

When the pagan Arabs came to Mecca to trade at the annual fairs, they also performed the customary rites of pilgrimage to the Ka'bah walking around it seven times, and kissing or touching the Black Stone, a meteorite to which great religious significance was attached. In addition to the Ka'bah, there were other sacred places at this time which attracted large crowds of annual pilgrims. The people, especially in times of anxiety and trouble, would often seek the guidance of the kahin (soothsayer). Inspired by the jinn (spirits) he rehearsed various oracles in verse form, which often foretold future events or provided answers to difficult problems. In Arabia, before the rise of Islam, there seems to have been an unorganised group of people who were inclined to favour the notion of monotheism. In the course of time these people were sometimes called hanīfs. According to the Qur'ān, Abraham is portrayed as the prototype hanīf. Watt, commenting on this point, states:

...This religion of Abraham was at first called the hanīfiyah or hanīf religion...In pre-Islamic Arabia, though there were men who were attracted by monotheism and who are called hanīfs by later Muslim writers, they do not seem to have applied the word to themselves. In the Qur'ān it is given a new turn and means a monotheist who is neither a Jew nor a Christian.²⁰

Hence, it is clear enough that individual Arabs, prior to the mission of Muḥammad, constructed their religious beliefs around a simple form of monotheism.

The pagan Arabs permitted Jews and Christians to settle down amongst them. For several centuries numbers of Jews had resided in Arabia, and some of them were in Mecca. In Yathrib (later Medina), which was two hundred miles north of Mecca, there were three tribes of Jews, with their synagogues and their scriptures. In northern Arabia there were several Arab tribes which had become Christian. In the south some tribes were largely Christian and had bishops and churches of their own. Their Christianity, however, seems to have been nominal and it seems that they lacked the love and purity of life to make them an effective missionary agency in Arabia. Such, then, was the religious position in Arabia at the end of the sixth century.

The preceding section sheds some light on the milieu into which Muḥammad was born. He was convinced that God had called him, as He had called the previous prophets, to release the people from the bonds of immorality and idolatry to the absolute worship of Allāh alone and to a life of righteousness and truth. As previously stated, Muḥammad had no need to establish proof of the existence of Allāh, for many of the pagan Arabs were already familiar with the notion of Allāh as creator and supreme ruler. According to Muslims, Muḥammad was called to assert the sole sovereignty of Allāh and to call upon mankind to respond to Allāh. Consequently, Muḥammad vehemently denounced polytheism and denied the existence of other deities. By the time of Muḥammad's death in 632 A.D. the Arabian peninsula was under the dominance of Islam.

Section 1.2: Muhammad's Life: The Meccan Period, to 610 A.D.

The Qur'ān, with regard to the birth and early life of Muḥammad, is silent. According to Islamic tradition, Muḥammad was born at Mecca in the 'Year of the Elephant'.²¹ That is to say, the year Abraha the Abyssinian marched unsuccessfully against Mecca with his army, which included an elephant. The event in question is referred to in the Qur'ān as follows:

...Seest thou not how thy Lord dealt with the companions of the elephant? Did He not make their treacherous plan go astray? And He sent against them flights of birds, striking them with stones of baked clay.²²

A. Yūsuf 'Alī, commenting on the above events, states:

...The incident happened in the very year of the holy Prophet's birth, barely two months before it.²³

It has been suggested²⁴ that the 'Year of the Elephant' would correspond to the year 570. However, such a proposal is questionable. For example, with reference to the date of Muḥammad's birth, the Encyclopaedia of Islam states:

...When, however, tradition puts the date of his birth in the 'year of the Elephant', this is a result of an unhistorical combination, for Abraha's attack on Mecca must have taken place considerably before 570...In reality 580 or one of the years immediately following would suit very well as the date of the Prophet's birth, so that the Kur'ānic expression 'umr would mean about 30 years.²⁵

Therefore, it is reasonably clear that Muḥammad was born in Mecca at an unknown date between 570 and 582.

Muḥammad²⁶ son of 'Abdullāh and his young wife Āmina bint Wahb, was born to the clan of Hashim, who belonged to the

tribe Quraish. There is an interesting story, derived from Islamic tradition, in respect of Muḥammad's conception and of the annunciation of Muḥammad's birth to Āmina. The account is, as follows:

...‘Abdullāh went into a woman that he had beside Āmina d. Wahb when he had been working in clay and the marks of the clay were on him. She put him off when he made a suggestion to her because of the dirt that was on him. He then left her and washed and bathed himself, and as he made his way to Āmina he passed her and she invited him to come to her. He refused and went to Āmina who conceived Muḥammad.

...When he passed the woman again he asked her if she wanted anything and she said 'No! When you passed me there was a white blaze between your eyes and when I invited you you refused me and went into Āmina, and she has taken it away.'

...It is alleged in popular stories (and only God knows the truth) that Āmina d. Wahb, the mother of God's apostle, used to say when she was pregnant with God's apostle that a voice said to her, 'You are pregnant with the lord of this people and when he is born say, I put him in the care of the One from the evil of every envier; then call him Muḥammad.'²⁷

The above story has limited historical value. Nevertheless, regardless of the dubious historical worth of the above material, it does show that Muḥammad, from the Islamic perspective, was considered to be the product of normal sexual relations between ‘Abdullāh and Āmina, and that Muḥammad's conception was within the purposes of God. Moreover, it should be noted that Muḥammad was to be the first and only child of the marriage between ‘Abdullāh and Āmina.

Various Islamic traditions surround Muḥammad's birth and childhood with premonitory signs.²⁸ For example, it is asserted that his mother Āmina enjoyed a problem free pregnancy and delivery. Also, it is claimed that on the

night of Muḥammad's birth there was an earthquake and that the sacred fire in the Persian palace of Ctesiphon was miraculously extinguished. These Islamic traditions are accepted as fact by some Muslims, but other Muslims would question the authenticity of the said traditions. In any case, it seems that Muḥammad's father 'Abdullāh, died before his son was born.²⁹ All in all, there is little historical information with regard to Muḥammad's childhood. It was the common practice of middle class Arabs to put their infants under the care of a wet-nurse. Accordingly, Muḥammad spent his early infancy with a nurse called Ḥalīma. Ḥalīma was a member of the clan of the Banū Sa'd, a segment of the well known tribe of Hawāzin.

According to Islamic tradition, something very strange happened to Muḥammad when he was about four years old. The relevant alleged story is presented via the medium of Muḥammad's own words as follows:

...Two men in white raiment came to me with a gold basin full of snow. Then they seized me and opened up my belly, extracted my heart and split it; then they extracted a black drop from it and threw it away; then they washed my heart and my belly with that snow until they had thoroughly cleaned them.

The one said to the other, weigh him against ten of his people; they did so and I outweighed them. Then they weighed me against a hundred and then a thousand, and I outweighed them. He said, 'Leave him alone, for by God, if you weighed him against all his people he would outweigh them.'³⁰

The above story is not an account of historical events, but it is perhaps intended as a commentary on a certain Quranic verse, namely, 'Have We not expanded thee thy breast?'³¹ A. Yūsuf 'Alī, commenting on the Quranic verse in question, states:

...The breast is symbolically the seat of knowledge and the highest feelings of love and affection, the treasure-house in which are stored

the jewels of that quality of human character which approaches nearest to the divine. The holy prophet's human nature had been purified, expanded, and elevated, so that he became a Mercy to all Creation.³²

From the Islamic viewpoint, Muḥammad's destiny was, from the very beginning, under the special control and guidance of God. In other words, God prepared and strengthened³³ Muḥammad for his forthcoming mission to mankind.

When Muḥammad was about six years old he went with his mother to visit some relatives in Yathrib. On the return journey to Mecca Āmina died at a place called Abwa. Undoubtedly, this was a severe shock to Muḥammad, and, consequently, the Qur'ān comments, 'Did He not find thee an orphan and give thee shelter and care?'³⁴ That shelter and care was provided by Muḥammad's eighty-year old grandfather, 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib. Two years later 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib died. Muḥammad was then cared for by his uncle Abū Ṭālib. It is claimed, by Islamic tradition, that at the age of twelve Muḥammad accompanied his uncle on a business trip to Syria. In respect of this journey there is a famous legend to show that Muḥammad's future career was foreseen. The Islamic historian al-Ṭabarī recounts as follows:

...When the company halted at Bostra in Syria, there was a monk named Baḥīrā, who dwelt in the hermitage there and who was well read in the learning of the Christians. When Baḥīrā saw the Envoy of Allah, he watched him very closely, and noted the details of his person. When the party had finished eating and were about to take their leave, he questioned the Envoy of Allah about the things he felt when he was awake or asleep. The Envoy of Allah answered him. Baḥīrā found all this according to the description which he had in his possession. Then he examined his back and found the seal of prophecy between his shoulders.

...Then Baḥīrā said to his uncle Abū Ṭālib: 'What relation is this boy to you?' And Abū Ṭālib answered: 'He is my son'. Baḥīrā said to him:

'He is not your son. This boy's father cannot be living.' 'He is my nephew', Abū Ṭālīb told him then. The monk asked: 'What became of his father?' 'He died while his mother was pregnant'. 'You speak the truth. Go back then to your own land and keep him safe from the Jews. By Allah, if they see him and get to know what I know about him they will try to harm him'.³⁵

It is impossible to know if Muḥammad did have esoteric conversations with the said Christian monk Baḥīrā. Still, the tradition in question does have some credibility.³⁶ With regard to the identity of Baḥīrā, it seems that John of Damascus and others, thought of him as being an Arian or a Nestorian.³⁷ At present, it may be said that Baḥīrā, from the Islamic perspective, serves to provide a measure of Christian acknowledgement with regard to the Muslim claim which portrays Muḥammad as the Messenger of God.

As the years passed the boy Muḥammad continued to mature in the home of his uncle Abū Ṭālīb. Ibn Ishāq, commenting on this point, states:

...The apostle of God grew up, God protecting him and keeping him from the vileness of heathenism because he wished to honour him with apostleship, until he grew up to be the finest of his people...so that he was known among his people as 'The trustworthy' because of the good qualities which God had implanted in him.³⁸

Often Muḥammad would travel with various trading caravans and, thereby, was exposed to different religious beliefs and customs. Eventually, when Muḥammad was about twenty-five years old, he married the wealthy Meccan widow, Khadījah. Prior to the marriage Muḥammad had been faithful and efficient in the employ of this lady, who supported her business via commercial dealings. Muslims tend to think that Khadījah was around the age of forty years when she married Muḥammad. This, however, may only be an approximation, and Khadījah may have been somewhat younger. After-all, their marriage was blessed with a number³⁹ of children of whom

only the girls survived. What was Khadījah's religion? As shown earlier, paganism was a dominant force in Arabia prior to the rise of Islam. There were also some Jewish and Christian communities; and some Arabs had embraced a simple form of monotheism. Consequently, Jurji states:

...Khadījah, it would seem, was too well acquainted with the monotheistic and foreign trends current in the Arabia of her time to have continued to be a pagan. One might even assert that she virtually belonged to that independent group of Arabians who had lifted themselves to a state of spiritual and moral thinking that made them capable not only of accepting what Muḥammad had in store, but, what is more significant, it was they upon whom devolved the burden of preparing the way and setting the stage for the remarkable spiritual upheaval which found its champion in the Prophet.⁴⁰

Accordingly, Muslims claim that Khadījah was a great source of comfort and encouragement to Muḥammad. In this regard, there is the story of Khadījah and Waraqa ibn Nawfal's interpretation of the sight of two angels protecting Muḥammad from the sun. The account is as follows:

...Khadījah had told Waraqa b. Nawfal b. Asad b. 'Abdu'l'Uzzā, who was her cousin and a Christian who had studied the scriptures and was a scholar, what her slave Maysara had told her that the monk had said and how he had seen the two angels shading him. He said, 'If this is true Khadījah, verily Muḥammad is the prophet of this people...Would that I might be there then to see, for I should be the first of his supporters, joining in that which Quraysh hate - however loud they shout in that Mecca of theirs. I hope to ascend through him whom they all dislike to the Lord of the throne though they are cast down. Is it folly not to disbelieve in Him Who chose him Who raised the starry heights? If they and I live, things will be done which will throw the unbelievers into confusion. And if I die, 'tis but the fate of mortals to suffer death and dissolution.⁴¹

The historical worth of the above story may be, to say the

least, limited. Nonetheless, the story in question does maintain the Islamic conviction that Muḥammad was greatly helped by his wife Khadījah. Moreover, the said story portrays Khadījah's cousin as a Christian scholar who is also in favour of the mission of Muḥammad and, consequently, the notion of Muḥammad's prophethood receives Christian endorsement. As long as Khadījah lived Muḥammad took no other wives. In this regard, Rodinson states:

...It is possible that their marriage contract involved an obligation on his part to take no second wife. The wealthy Khadījah was in a position to make demands. But, as a man known for his belief in fairness and moderation, Muḥammad was bound to the mother of his children by ties much stronger than any written undertaking.⁴²

Later on, however, Muḥammad was to contract a number of marriages.

Muḥammad, following his marriage to Khadījah, continued in commercial business, and it appears that he was highly esteemed by his associates. For instance, when Muḥammad was about thirty-five years old the Ka'bah, having fallen into disrepair, was being rebuilt. When the work was close to completion the time came to replace the Black Stone at the corner of the building. However, there was severe disagreement as to who should have the honour of replacing the Black Stone. In this connection there is the following story:

...A traditionist alleged that Abū Umayya b. al-Mughira b. 'Abdullah b. 'Umar b. Makhzum who was at that time the oldest man of Quraysh, urged them to make the first man to enter the gate of the mosque umpire in the matter in dispute. They did so and the first to come in was the apostle of God. When they saw him they said, 'This is the trustworthy one. We are satisfied. This is Muḥammad'.

...When he came to them and they informed him of the matter he said, 'Give me a cloak', and when

it was brought to him he took the black stone and put it inside it and said that each tribe should take hold of an end of the cloak and they should lift it together. They did this so that when they got it into position he placed it with his own hand, and then building went on above it.⁴³

The above story, if historically genuine⁴⁴, appears to portray Muḥammad as a respected member of the community at Mecca.

As already stated, the religious climate in Mecca, prior to the ministry of Muḥammad, was unstable. Muḥammad, via his prosperous marriage with Khadījah, was provided with the opportunity to engage in sustained religious vigils and meditation. According to Islamic tradition, Muḥammad would often retire to Mount Hirā' near Mecca for solitude and contemplation, and it was there, some time after his fortieth birthday, that he experienced his call to be a prophet (nabī) and messenger (rasūl), and his first order to recite the Qur'ān. According to the Qur'ān, it was the month of Ramadān⁴⁵ when the call came to Muḥammad. Moreover, the Qur'ān portrays the said call as having occurred, 'During a blessed night'⁴⁶ and 'In the Night of Power'⁴⁷ The majority⁴⁸ of Muslims believe that Muḥammad first recited the following Quranic verses:

...Proclaim! (or Read!) In the name of thy Lord and Cherisher, who created, created man out of a mere clot of congealed blood. Proclaim! And thy Lord is most bountiful, He who taught the use of a pen, taught man that which he knew not. Nay, but man doth transgress all bounds, in that he looketh upon himself as self-sufficient. Verily, to thy Lord is the return of all.⁴⁹

Thus, Muḥammad had received the initial revelatory messages which were to develop into the Muslim scripture, namely, the Qur'ān.

Muḥammad, unable to see the immediate significance of the

experience of revelation, was deeply disturbed. At one point he considered that he might be insane, or possessed by an evil force.⁵⁰ In this regard, the Qur'ān brings comfort and reassurance to Muḥammad that he has nothing to fear and that the revelations come from God.⁵¹ Muḥammad's experience of revelation is commented upon by two of the most respected Muslim traditionists, al-Bukhārī (died 870) and Muslim (died 875), as follows:

...An angel came to him and said, 'Recite'. He replied, 'I am not a reciter'. The Prophet said, 'Then he seized me and squeezed me until fatigue overtook me. Then he let me go, and said, 'Recite!' and squeezed me a second time until fatigue overtook me. After that he said, 'Recite!' I replied, 'I am not a reciter'. Then he seized me and squeezed me a third time, until fatigue overtook me. After that he let me go and said, 'Recite in the name of thy Lord...' (sūrah 96).

...Then the Apostle of God repeated these words, his heart trembling the while. And he entered in to Khadījah and said, 'Wrap me up! Wrap me up!' Then they wrapped him up until the fear went from him. Then he spoke to Khadījah and informed her of the matter, saying, 'I certainly feared for my life'. Then Khadījah said, 'Never by God! God will never bring thee to shame. Verily thou dost perform acts of mercy, and thou dost speak the truth, and givest help to all men...'⁵²

Muḥammad was disturbed by the initial encounter with the experience of revelation. Khadījah, as portrayed in the above account, was of immeasurable help and comfort to Muḥammad. The crisis of doubt and bewilderment was intensified by a long gap (fatra)⁵³ between the revelations. It seems that the said period of intermission lasted for approximately three years.

Further, as already noted, Khadījah's cousin, Waraqah ibn Nawfal, had embraced Christianity in the jāhiliyya, and was considered to be familiar with the Hebrew and Christian scriptures.⁵⁴ The dialogue between Waraqah and Muḥammad,

with regard to Muḥammad's initial experience of revelation, is recorded as follows:

...Waraqah met him and said, 'O son of my brother, tell me what thou has seen and heard'. The apostle told him, and Waraqah said, 'Surely, by Him in whose hand is Waraqah's soul, thou art the prophet of this people.

There hath come unto thee the greatest Namus, who came unto Moses. Thou wilt be called a liar, and they will use thee despitefully and cast thee out and fight against thee. Verily, if I live to see that day, I will help God in such wise as He knoweth'.⁵⁵

The term nāmūs, as cited above, was identified by the Muslims as referring to the archangel Gabriel. According to Rodinson⁵⁶, the term in question is in reality the Greek word for Law (nomos). Thus, Waraqah was referring to the revelation of the Torah, as revealed by God to his servant Moses. All in all, Muḥammad must have been greatly encouraged by his favourable encounter with Waraqah. In other words, Muḥammad's experience of revelation had been endorsed by a Christian as being in continuity with the divine message previously received by Moses.

At last the revelations were re-commenced, and Muḥammad received divine confirmation of his mission. The Qur'ān states:

...By the glorious morning light, and by the night when it is still. Thy guardian - Lord hath not forsaken thee, nor is He displeased. And verily the hereafter will be better for thee than the present. And soon will thy guardian - Lord give thee that wherewith thou shalt be well-pleased.⁵⁷

Gradually, Muḥammad gained a clearer conception of his mission as the messenger of a divine message to mankind. Hence, he embarked upon his public career as the Messenger of God. The Qur'ān, time after time, makes it crystal clear

that Muḥammad, in continuity with the previous prophets, was the recipient of divine revelation.⁵⁸ The general Muslim opinion is that the angel Gabriel (Jibrīl) was the medium of the revelation communicated to Muḥammad.⁵⁹ Hence, Muḥammad, via the process of revelation, recreates on earth a copy of 'a tablet preserved'⁶⁰ or 'the mother of the book'.⁶¹ In other words, Muḥammad recites orally the revelations which come to him.⁶² Further, Muḥammad receives the revelations in the Arabic language.⁶³ Yet, the Qur'ān is silent with regard to the actual language of the 'tablet preserved'.

It is reasonable to assume that the majority of Muslims accept an actual external appearance of the angel Gabriel (Jibrīl), even though visions did not necessarily always accompany the revelations. In contrast, other Muslims prefer to 'spiritualise' the whole notion of the process of revelation, but in so doing they in no way detract from the message of the Qur'ān. Indeed, a small minority of Muslims conclude, on the basis of two Quranic verses⁶⁴, that God himself appeared to Muḥammad. According to Muslims, Muḥammad was not the source, but only the channel, of the divine revelation which he received and proclaimed for some twenty years. In this regard, Muslims claim that Muḥammad was illiterate. At the time of Muḥammad's birth the art of reading and writing was quite common at Mecca⁶⁵, and it is possible that Muḥammad was able to read and write.⁶⁶ The true significance of the Muslim understanding of Muḥammad's illiteracy is expressed by Nasr as follows:

...The unlettered nature of the Prophet means most of all the extinction of all that is human before the Divine. The soul of the Prophet was a tabula rasa before the Divine Pen.⁶⁷

Consequently, Muslims assert that Muḥammad was able to eliminate his own personal thoughts and speech from the revelation which came to him from above. That is to say, the Qur'ān, from the Muslim perspective, is presented as being an

entirely objective revelation, and that Muḥammad was the passive recipient of it. The Quranic revelation conveyed to Muḥammad portrays him as one in continuity with all the previous prophets. However, Muḥammad was conscious of the fact that all revelation had not been imparted to him. The Qur'ān states:

...We did aforetime send apostles before thee, of them there are some whose story We have related to thee, and some whose story we have not related to thee...⁶⁸

...Of some apostles We have already told thee the story; of others We have not; and to Moses God spoke direct.⁶⁹

Similarly, Muḥammad is warned about hastening the revelation of the Qur'ān. Thus, Muḥammad is exhorted to pray for more knowledge.⁷⁰ In any event, many non-Muslims as well as Muslims have concluded that Muḥammad and his followers were utterly convinced that he had been called of God to receive and proclaim a divine message. For instance, the Swedish Bishop, Tor Andrae, states:

...Formerly, men thought that his character revealed a certain premeditation, a calculating cleverness...That Muḥammad acted in good faith can hardly be disputed by anyone who knows the psychology of inspiration. That the message which he proclaimed did not come from himself nor from his own ideas and opinion, is not only a tenet of his faith, but also an experience whose reality he never questioned.⁷¹

The above sentiments express, from a modern Christian perspective, the fact of Muḥammad's sincerity in respect of his religious beliefs. Nonetheless, sincerely held beliefs may be sincerely incorrect. In the course of this thesis we shall analyse the various Christian responses to the Islamic understanding of the work of Muḥammad.

Section 1.3: Muhammad's Ministry in Mecca, 610 to 621 A.D.

The earliest converts to the message delivered by Muḥammad were members of his closest family, namely, his wife Khadījah,⁷² and his young cousin 'Alī ibn abi Ṭālib.⁷³ Another early convert was Muḥammad's adopted son, Zayd ibn Hāritha.⁷⁴ Moreover, one of Muḥammad's friends, Abū Bakr, is said ⁷⁵ to have been a very early convert.⁷⁶ Muḥammad, in the early days of his ministry at Mecca, seems to have engaged in 'secret preaching' in the house of a wealthy young man called al-Arqam.⁷⁷ Indeed, there gradually grew up around Muḥammad a group of devoted converts. Yet, what sort of persons were attracted by Muḥammad's message? The first Muslims are referred to as being 'young and weak'.⁷⁸ Some were young aristocrats of Qurashi families. Others, those considered weak (mustada' fūn) were young proteges of the Quraish. Lastly, the group also included slaves. All in all, the early Muslim movement consisted mainly of young men. Similarly, it is interesting that Jesus, with the Christian tradition, attracted young men as his first disciples.

For over a decade Muḥammad exercised a public ministry in Mecca. What was the nature of the message conveyed by Muḥammad? His preaching in Mecca centred upon the reality of the one sovereign, merciful and compassionate God (Allāh) as the creator, sustainer, and judge on the Day of Resurrection. Accordingly, man is called to respond to God alone in thankful submission, and to engage in charitable giving to others. Thus, in opposition to the many gods recognised by the Arabs, Muḥammad proclaimed the sole sovereignty of Allāh. According to the Qur'ān, the message conveyed by Muḥammad was not a new message, but the same as 'the books of Abraham and Moses'.⁷⁹ It seems that the majority of Meccans first treated Muḥammad's preaching with total indifference. However, as the early Muslim community began to develop, the pagan Arabs began first to fear Muḥammad, and then to oppose him. The material prosperity of Mecca was dependent upon the religious notions of the pagan Arabs. Hence, when Muḥammad

condemned their beliefs and customs he was attacking their religious and economic sensibilities.⁸⁰

The general nature of the Meccan opposition to Muḥammad is recorded in numerous places in the Qur'ān. For instance, the Meccans imply that they are satisfied with their present understanding and practice of religion.⁸¹ Further, they see nothing in Muḥammad's ministry to entice them away from their present traditions. Moreover, the Meccans claim that Muḥammad is 'no apostle'.⁸² They think of Muḥammad as being only a mere mortal⁸³, a poet⁸⁴, a madman⁸⁵, and a fool⁸⁶. There is no sign to support the message conveyed by Muḥammad.⁸⁷ Additionally, there is no hint of an angel or treasure being sent down⁸⁸, nor does Allāh come.⁸⁹ Muḥammad, in Meccan eyes, is seen as the inventor⁹⁰, with the assistance of others⁹¹, of the so-called divine message which he proclaims. The Meccans claim that they can produce, by their own efforts, a similar revelation to that preached by Muḥammad.⁹² They also consider the revelation brought by Muḥammad as a falsehood⁹³ a composition of ancient fables⁹⁴, a medley of dreams⁹⁵, and foolish nonsense.⁹⁶ In particular, the Meccans dismiss the idea of resurrection⁹⁷, and the notion of the Day of Judgement⁹⁸, inviting Muḥammad to speedily usher it in.⁹⁹ Indeed, the Meccans even prohibit others from listening¹⁰⁰ to Muḥammad, because they reckon that he is only a troublemaker.¹⁰¹

Muḥammad, in response to the Meccan opposition, makes no secret of the fact that he is only a man¹⁰², and not an angel.¹⁰³ Thus, Muḥammad presents himself as one who can do nothing without the power and will of God.¹⁰⁴ However, Muḥammad emphatically denies being a poet¹⁰⁵, a soothsayer¹⁰⁶, a madman¹⁰⁷, and a pretender.¹⁰⁸ He is not concerned about any financial or material reward for his ministry.¹⁰⁹ Indeed, he openly calls upon the Meccans to produce a sūrah of revelation similar to what he himself has received and delivered.¹¹⁰ Moreover, Muḥammad is grievously hurt¹¹¹ by the mocking attitude of the Meccans.

Nevertheless, Muḥammad is called to be patient¹¹² and to display noble dignity¹¹³ in the face of mockery and unbelief. Further, he is called not to despair¹¹⁴, but to trust in God¹¹⁵, not only for this present life, but for the life to come.

As time progressed Muḥammad and his followers were the recipients of more violent persecution from the Meccans. In this connection, the Muslim traditionist, Urwa ibn Zubayr, states:

...From Ta'if there came some of the Quraish, owners of property there, and rebutted him (the Messenger of God) with vehemence, not approving what he said, and roused against him those who obeyed him. So the body of people turned back from him...except those who God kept safe, and they were few in number...Then there was a time of extreme trial...When the Muslims were treated in this way, God told them to go to the land of the Abyssinians.¹¹⁶

Muḥammad and some of his more influential followers, being protected via their tribal connections, did not suffer physical persecution. Still, his humble followers suffered much at the hands of the Meccans. Some of the first Muslims, perhaps no more than fifteen originally¹¹⁷, sought refuge in Abyssinia, where they could live in peace. However, Muḥammad and some of his followers, about forty men and ten or twenty women, remained in Mecca.¹¹⁸ Muḥammad was, of course, saddened and perhaps embittered by the hostile reaction of the Meccans to the message he proclaimed. There is a significant difference in the revelations now delivered. Previously Muḥammad had recounted Allāh's attributes¹¹⁹ in benevolent terms.¹²⁰ In the wake of persecution, however, the revelations take a much more personal form of denunciation of Muḥammad's enemies.¹²¹

In general, the Meccans became more and more annoyed with Muḥammad. The position, though it still remained tense,

seemed at one time to become less strained. That is to say, it appears that on one occasion Muḥammad engaged in dialogue with some of the prominent men of Mecca. In turn he went on to speak of the Meccan idols. In this regard, the Qur'ān states:

'Have ye seen Lāt and 'Uzzā, and another, the third goddess, Manāt?'¹²²

Then came words designed, presumably, to appeal to the Quraish, who were intrigued by the above statement and who now heard, in respect of the idols in question, the following Quranic words:

'Those are the swans exalted; their intercession is expected; their likes are not neglected'.¹²³

To put it another way, Muḥammad appears to be in sympathy with the goddesses espoused by the Quraish. Consequently, Muḥammad seems to be advocating polytheism, and the strict monotheism which he previously embraced is now compromised.¹²⁴

The above-mentioned sentiments with regard to polytheism appear to be a complete denial of monotheism. How could Muḥammad justify such a polytheistic position? The use of the word 'goddesses', as referred to above, is in no way akin to the type of deities found in Greek mythology. Watt, commenting on the goddesses in question, states:

...Perhaps the enlightened Arabs of the day regarded these as various manifestations of a single divine power, just as in later times the Muslims spoke of the ninety-nine names of God. The phrase 'daughters of God' would not be incompatible with this, for the Arabs used the ideas of daughterhood, fatherhood and sonship to express abstract relations. In this way Muḥammad and his followers could have regarded the 'satanic verses' as authorizing the worship of the divine at the three shrines indicated, and

yet not have felt that they were compromising their monotheism.¹²⁵

In any case, Muḥammad soon realised that he had made a mistake. Hence, Rodinson states:

...Muḥammad must very soon have realised the implications of this concession. It meant that the sect renounced all claim to originality. Jews and Christians pointed out maliciously that Muḥammad was reverting to his pagan beginnings... Above all, what authority was left to the herald sent by Allāh if any little priest of al-‘Uzzā or Manāt could pronounce oracles contradicting his message?¹²⁶

Therefore, Muḥammad had to retire from the false position he had taken up. He saw that many of the people still worshipped idols and that his concession had done no good whatsoever. Hence, Satan was blamed for corrupting the first revelation given to Muḥammad with regard to the idols in question. Moreover, God restored the confidence of Muḥammad by imparting to him the true revelation concerning idols. The Qur’ān states:

...These are nothing but names which ye have devised. Ye and your fathers, for which God has sent down no authority whatever. They follow nothing but conjecture and what their own souls desire!¹²⁷

The Quraish were outraged by the revised revelation delivered by Muḥammad, and they resumed their persecution of the Muslims. Muḥammad now severed all links with idolatry and began to declare the punishment due to idolaters.

Muḥammad found himself in very serious difficulties when his wife Khadījah and his uncle Abū-Tālib both died in the year 619. Gradually, opposition to Muḥammad and his followers was intensified. Indeed, the increasing antagonism from his own clan is mirrored in the Qur’ān.¹²⁸ As the conversion of

Mecca seemed hopeless, Muḥammad attempted to alleviate his troubles by approaching the people of at-Tā'if, a hill town some forty miles east of Mecca, and asking them to accept himself and his community. They refused, and Muḥammad was bitterly disappointed.¹²⁹ Muḥammad returned to Mecca and in 621, at pilgrimage time, he entered into negotiations with some citizens of Yathrib, a place some two hundred miles north-east of Mecca, and was able to secure an agreement that he and his followers would be accepted and given protection. As a matter of fact, for some time Yathrib had been a place beset with factional problems. Some leaders of this place, in order to solve their problems, turned to Muḥammad for help and advice. Undoubtedly, their request was a sincere tribute to Muḥammad's integrity and wisdom. Muḥammad, over a period of two years, negotiated with some of the leaders of Yathrib, and this dialogue led to the famous pledges of Aqabah.¹³⁰ The first pledge committed the people of Yathrib to renounce idolatry, theft, adultery and infanticide. Also, they were to obey Muḥammad in all that was right, and to be instructed in Islam by a teacher whom Muḥammad sent. Further, in the second pledge the people promised to fight, in time of war, in the cause of God and His prophet.¹³¹ The majority of Muḥammad's followers soon drifted away from Mecca to take up their new homes in Yathrib, and they were followed in 622 by Muḥammad himself. Afterwards Yathrib became known as Medina (madīnat al - nabī), city of the Prophet. Muḥammad's emigration from Mecca to Medina is called the hijrah. Since it marked a decisive turning point in his fortunes and those of his community, it was adopted as the starting point of the Islamic calendar.¹³²

Section 1.4: Muhammad's Work in Medina: After the hijrah, 621 to 632 A.D.

From the Christian perspective, the hijrah is often seen as a portrayal of a basic difference between Jesus and Muhammad. In other words, Muhammad, through his determination to escape persecution in Mecca, chose the way of human success by leaving the city. In contrast, Jesus chose the path of suffering which appeared to be the way of human defeat by his death outside the city.¹³³ In this regard, the Islamic viewpoint is clearly expressed by Rahman as follows:

...So addicted are these (Christian) writers to pathetic tales of sorrow, failure, frustration and crucifixion that the very idea of success in this sphere seems to them abhorrent...If history is the proper sphere for divine activity, historical forces must, by definition, be employed for the moral end as judiciously as possible.¹³⁴

The above Muslim rejoinder is deserving of worthy consideration by Christians. After all, Moses, an important figure in both Christianity and Islam, led the children of Israel out of the oppression of Pharaonic Egypt to the land of Canaan and eventually Jerusalem. Likewise, Jesus during the exercise of his ministry withdrew, at least on one occasion¹³⁵, in order to escape physical persecution.

Furthermore, as Jesus approached the climax of his ministry he prayed for the peace of Jerusalem.¹³⁶ Similarly, Muhammad, by vacating Mecca in favour of Yathrib, sought peace. But, all of this having been said, Jesus, from the Christian viewpoint, remained in Jerusalem and faced the consequences of his ministry, namely, rejection and crucifixion. Cragg, commenting on this point, states:

...The situations of Jesus in Jerusalem and Muhammad in Mecca are in some measure analogous. Both faced an opposition to religious truth based

on prestige and pride. Both were rejected as upstarts, disruptive of the status quo. The Pharisees and the Quraish - though otherwise highly contrasted - are thus far alike. But there the similarity ends. Jesus did not conquer Jerusalem. He suffered outside its walls. The Cross became his throne.¹³⁷

Therefore, the notion of pathos and suffering, as portrayed in the crucifixion of Jesus, present a theological perspective which can find no echo in the ministry of Muḥammad.

Muḥammad, as he made his hijrah to Yathrib, showed that there could be no compromise with pagan Meccan society. Moreover, the significance of the hijrah in the development of Muhammad's ministry is also seen via the inauguration of the Muslim community (ummah muslimah). Hence, the Qur'ān states:

...Let there arise out of you a band of people inviting to all that is good, enjoining what is right, and forbidding what is wrong. They are the ones to attain felicity.¹³⁸

In addition, there is also a spiritual dimension associated with the hijrah. The Qur'ān states:

...He who forsakes his home in the cause of God, finds in the earth many a refuge, wide and spacious. Should he die as a refugee from home for God and his apostle, his reward becomes due and sure with God.¹³⁹

Moreover, the above Quranic sentiments also involve the duty of jihād¹⁴⁰ which in turn calls Muslims to strive in the cause of God.

Muḥammad found that the situation at Yathrib (Medina) was very different from that at Mecca. Medina was an oasis with well-developed agriculture and a settled population. However, for some time, life had been disrupted by fighting between tribal elements over the ownership of land. Some of

Medina's citizens, therefore, banded themselves together under the leadership of Muḥammad, in the hope that they would be able to restore peace. Muḥammad, as community leader, continued to be the recipient of divine revelation, amounting to twenty-two Medina sūrahs, providing laws and ethical norms for the community (ummah). Without doubt, Muḥammad's leadership was greatly enhanced by his status as prophet. For example, the Quranic command, 'Obey God and His Prophet', carries an inherent note of authority. In this regard, the Islamic viewpoint is expressed by Rahman as follows:

...That is precisely why the Medinese career of the Prophet, far from being a compromise of Islam with politics, is the inevitable fulfilment of Muhammad's Prophethood.¹⁴¹

The nature of the new community (ummah) was set out in a famous document between Muḥammad and the Medinese, known as the Constitution of Medina.¹⁴² The political vision and skill of Muḥammad are shown in the said agreement which contains six essential principles defining the character of the ummah. Firstly, the believers constitute a single ummah under the protection of God. Secondly, each tribal group within the ummah is responsible for the blood-money of its members. Thirdly, all the believers stand in solidarity against crime. Fourthly, all the believers stand in solidarity against unbelievers in war and peace. Fifthly, Jews may belong to the ummah while retaining their own religion. Additionally, Jews and Muslims are to help one another, including military aid. Lastly, Muḥammad is designated as the arbitrator of all community affairs. The 'protection of God', as referred to above, replaces the notion of blood-kinship as the basis of the community. Also, at this time, the oasis of Yathrib became known as Medina, the city of the Prophet (madīnat al-nabī). Indeed, the growing influence of this community was the main reason for the success of Islam in Muḥammad's lifetime. Serjeant, commenting on this point, states:

...To suppose that the Prophet conquered Arabia would be a misconception. He did of course, from time to time, despatch punitive expeditions when security was broken, or make military demonstrations to induce other groups to join in the peace - but his control of Arabia was gained by persuasive and political means.¹⁴³

It was, however, the policy of force which had its greatest effect upon Islam. According to the early biographies of Muḥammad, the Muslims acquired property and sustenance by plundering the trading caravans of the Meccans. There was nothing seriously wrong, from an Arab point of view, in one tribe attacking the property of another. Nevertheless, on one occasion, Muḥammad sanctioned a raid to be conducted during a period when war was prohibited, namely, the sacred month of Rajab. Nakhlah was the venue for the raid, which involved the death of one man and the capture of much booty. To violate the sacred month, as referred to above, caused so much disillusionment among Jews and Arabs that Muḥammad at first denied all responsibility for the raid and declined to dispense the spoils of war. Some time later, however, Muḥammad received a revelation which conveyed approval of the raid in question.¹⁴⁴ All in all, the Muslims adopted an offensive strategy against the Meccans. The Muslims provoked three military passages of arms in their struggle against Mecca.

At Badr (624) the Muslims secured victory over a larger Meccan force. Of course, the said victory was portrayed as being of immense religious significance. That is, God was considered to be on the side of the Muslims vindicating the faith of the new community.¹⁴⁵ The following year (625) there was another encounter at Uḥud and the Meccans, seeking revenge, gained a victory over the Muslims, and during the fighting Muḥammad sustained minor wounds. The Meccans, however, failed to follow up this victory and the Muslims were able to re-organise their force.¹⁴⁶ Two years later (627) the Meccans besieged Medina, but the Muslims, prompted by the rôle of espionage¹⁴⁷, had previously dug a ditch around Medina,

thereby, frustrating the Meccan advance. The result of this so-called 'Battle of the Ditch' gradually culminated in victory for the Muslims.¹⁴⁸

The Meccans refused to permit the Muslims to enter Mecca. However, in 628 Muḥammad engaged in dialogue with the Meccans and established with them the Treaty of al-Hudaybiyah. This pact committed both sides to a ten year truce. Furthermore, it granted the Muslims pilgrimage rights to Mecca for the following year (629). Undoubtedly, the said agreement was a diplomatic¹⁴⁹ achievement for the Muslims. The following year (629) the Meccans honoured their commitment and abandoned Mecca for three days so that the Muslims could perform the pilgrimage. In the year 630, on the pretence that the Meccans had violated an agreement with some allies of the Muslims, the Muslims advanced with an army to Mecca. The Meccans surrendered to the Muslims without any serious violence, and the majority of the inhabitants of Mecca embraced Islam. Muḥammad was now in control of Mecca, from where he had made his hijrah only eight years before. Certainly, the victorious entry of Muḥammad into Mecca represents the climax of his ministry as the Prophet of Islam. Muḥammad, as victor of Mecca, offered a general pardon to those who offered no opposition.¹⁵⁰ Subsequently, all the idols in the Ka'bah were destroyed, and Mecca was declared to be a sacred enclave (haram). The Ka'bah, however, was to maintain a unique place within Islam. Cragg, commenting on this point, states:

...Muḥammad was anxious to pacify Mecca as rapidly as possible and to incorporate the purged Ka'bah into Islamic pilgrimage, thus preserving for the new faith the cohesive power of Meccan prestige.¹⁵¹

Thus, a new chapter had begun in the history of Mecca, which continues to this day.

In retrospect, the encounter between Muḥammad and the Jews is worthy of consideration. Muḥammad was certain that he was

called to be a prophet by the God of the Bible.¹⁵² Indeed, Muḥammad, during his early ministry in Mecca, looked upon the Jews as fellow believers who had received the Revelation. Moreover, before the hijrah Muḥammad, as he negotiated with the leaders of Yathrib, portrayed the Jews as a people favoured by God.¹⁵³ At the conclusion of his initial ministry in Mecca, he even begins to see himself as one whose coming had been foretold in the Bible.¹⁵⁴ Clearly, Muḥammad expected the Jews to acknowledge him as a true prophet, and the Qur'ān as divine revelation. From Muḥammad's perspective, the Qur'ān was a confirmation of previous scriptures, and he challenged the pagan Arabs to ask the Jews who could verify its divine origin.¹⁵⁵

There was a Jewish community at Yathrib. Muḥammad, soon after his arrival in Yathrib, expected that the Jews would admit the divine origin of Islam, and acknowledge him as a prophet sent by God. Muḥammad gave the Jews religious liberty and used them as allies. Possibly to placate the Jews, the Muslims patterned some of their religious practices on Jewish forms of worship¹⁵⁶ and even turned for prayer to Jerusalem.¹⁵⁷ The Jews in Yathrib were probably of Arab descent, but their conversion to Judaism, centuries before, had turned them into members of Israel. A few individual Jews did embrace Islam. The majority, however, rejected Muḥammad and his revelation. The Jews in question claimed that there could be no prophets outside of Israel, and that Muḥammad's teachings were not in conformity with the Bible. Consequently, the Qur'ān condemns the Jews for their partisan attitudes¹⁵⁸, and for renouncing and killing earlier prophets.¹⁵⁹ Further, the Qur'ān records a long series of revelations accusing the Jews of dishonesty in tampering with their scriptures.¹⁶⁰ The Jews are further Quranically chastised for calling Ezra a son of God¹⁶¹, for failing to live in accordance with their own teachings¹⁶², for being obsessed with self-interest¹⁶³, and for being antagonistic to the believers.¹⁶⁴ Also, according to the Qur'ān, Muslims should not befriend Jews.¹⁶⁵ Even the rabbis are now

declared evil.¹⁶⁶

The sharp reversal of the Quranic response to the Jews is, to say the least, remarkable. In short, Muḥammad felt betrayed. He had previously assumed that the Jews would support him in his struggle against paganism. The Jews turned against Muḥammad, and he rejected Judaism. The division between Islam and Judaism was expressed via several liturgical changes. As already stated, the Muslims prayed facing Jerusalem, now they are asked to face Mecca.¹⁶⁷ Moreover, formerly the Muslims fasted twenty-four hours on the feast of the 'Āshūrā' (the Jewish Yom Kippur), now this fast ceases to be an obligation and becomes simply a praiseworthy practice.

The tense verbal encounters between the Muslims and the Jews, irritated further by political and economic factors, finally exploded into aggression and hostility. Thus, in the wake of Badr the Jewish clan, Banu-Qaynuqā', was forcefully expelled from Medina.¹⁶⁸ Similarly, the Jewish clan, Banu-Nadīr, was banished from Medina after the Battle of Uḥud.¹⁶⁹ Following the 'Battle of the Ditch', Muḥammad turned on the remaining Jewish clan in Medina, Banu Qurayzah, the members of which were sympathisers with the Meccans during the said battle. After a short siege the Jews in question surrendered unconditionally to the Muslims. The Arab tribe of the Aws pleaded on behalf of the Jews, and Muḥammad asked the Jews if they would accept the judgement of one of the leading men among the Aws. In this proposed method of arbitration Muḥammad avoided any possibility of a blood-feud.¹⁷⁰ The Jews agreed, and Muḥammad appointed a man who was suffering from a deadly wound, whose verdict was, with regard to the Jews, that the men should be put to death and the women and children sold as slaves. In 627 the sentence was carried out. Some eight hundred men were beheaded and the women and children were reduced to slavery. Undoubtedly, nominal Christians and Jews have done similar and worse things in the cause of national, religious, or social security, and the fault lies not in religion but in sinful human nature. Kerr,

commenting on Muḥammad's treatment of the Jews in question, states:

...The historical evidence indicates that several leaders of the Jewish tribes in Madīnah betrayed the terms of the Charter by secretly allying themselves with the pagan opposition led by the Quraish...This presented Muḥammad with a very serious political problem which he resolved in part by punishing the treachery of the Jewish tribes. But this was a political action against the Jewish tribes rather than a persecution of the Jews as Jews, as is shown by the fact that Muḥammad later took a Jewish wife as a signal of religious reconciliation.¹⁷¹

However, one does not expect such acts from one who comes with a message from the Compassionate and Merciful. Finally, in 628 the Jews living in Khaybar, a Jewish centre some one hundred miles north of Medina, were dispossessed of their lands by Muslims.

Muḥammad's abortive encounter with the Jews and Judaism served to strengthen his sense of continuity with previous prophets and their true disciples. That is to say, Muḥammad equated his experience of the hostility of the Jews with their similar opposition to Jesus. Therefore, Muḥammad assumed that he should have much in common with Christian teachings.¹⁷² The extent of Muḥammad's knowledge about Christianity has been a topic of much debate. To date, there is no evidence to suggest that Muḥammad was in contact with an actual Christian community. As previously stated, Muḥammad may have had some contact with the Nestorian monk Baḥīrā. But is there any evidence to suggest that Muḥammad was familiar with scriptural writings of any kind? In this connection, O'Shaughnessy states:

...Probably too, parts of Sacred Scripture were, in Muḥammad's time, already translated into Arabic. It is more likely, however, that he and the Arabs in general heard them in improvised translations from other languages as is indicated

by the many religious terms borrowed from Aramaic, Syriac and Abyssinian sources used in the Qur'ān. Snatches of parables and an occasional indirect reference show that Muḥammad had some knowledge of the canonical Gospels, always referred to collectively by their Greek term euangelion, Arabicized into Injīl.

...But, as is evident from the Qur'ān, the greater part of his knowledge of New Testament events must have come from apocryphal writings either directly or in some of the alterations which legends about Jesus and other Gospel characters underwent in circulating among the common people. Even though one assumes that Muḥammad could read, there is little chance that he had in his possession Scriptural writings of any kind.¹⁷³

It would seem then that Muḥammad had no personal experience of Christianity when he referred to Jesus and his teachings. Hence, Muḥammad considered himself, and the revelation conveyed by him¹⁷⁴, to be in continuity with the message delivered by the previous prophets, including Jesus, who also had faced rejection by the Jews. This assumed affinity is based on the belief that Christians and Muslims share the same teachings and that Christians will accept the revelations delivered by Muḥammad as being of divine origin.

Muḥammad, in an attempt to uphold the name of Jesus in the face of opposition from the Jews, delivers more specific Quranic language in respect of the actual person and life of Jesus. For instance, the Qur'ān refers to Jesus' origin¹⁷⁵, mission¹⁷⁶ and life.¹⁷⁷ This leads Muḥammad to re-interpret the figure of Christ in the terms of his own experience and according to his own categories. In defending Jesus, he defends his own teachings. Eventually, Muḥammad was the recipient of some information about Jesus' life and teachings. However, this information was imparted to Muḥammad via the efforts of some Jews who sought to shatter his favourable opinion of Jesus. The Qur'ān responds by abruptly denying the said criticisms. For example, the

Qur'ān states:

...They do blaspheme who say, 'God is Christ the son of Mary'. But said Christ, 'O children of Israel! Worship God, my Lord and your Lord'. Whoever joins gods with God, God will forbid him the Garden, and the Fire will be his abode. There will for the wrong-doers be no one to help.¹⁷⁸

...That they said in boast, 'We killed Christ Jesus the son of Mary, the Apostle of God'. But they killed him not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them. And those who differ therein are full of doubts, with no certain knowledge, but only conjecture to follow, for of a surety they killed him not. Nay, God raised him up unto Himself in Power, Wise.¹⁷⁹

The passages cited above are addressed to the Jews only¹⁸⁰ with the express purpose of counteracting some claims or arguments of Jewish polemics with reference to the person and destiny of the historical Jesus. Thus, the above-cited Quranic passage, with regard to the destiny of Jesus, does not necessarily deny the fact of the crucifixion¹⁸¹, but is an attempt to deny the Jews any reason to rejoice over Jesus' execution as being a sign of his defeat.

In 632, a few months before Muḥammad's death, an official delegation of Christians from Najrān (Yemen) sought dialogue with Muḥammad. As a result of their discussions, Muḥammad invites the Christians to embrace Islam. Moreover, he challenges them to an ordeal by fire.¹⁸² The Christians refuse the challenge and it becomes apparent that Christian teachings are at variance with Muḥammad's doctrines. Thus, Muḥammad's defence of Jesus against the Jews must now be repeated against the Christians. In consequence a new vision emerges proclaiming that Islam is the only religion accepted by God.¹⁸³ From the Quranic perspective, all other religions have abandoned truth by distorting their own scriptures.¹⁸⁴ Further, the Qur'ān records that the Christians themselves have fallen into sin.¹⁸⁵ There is the additional Quranic

teaching that Muslims should not befriend Christians¹⁸⁶, but Muslims may eat with Christians and marry their daughters.¹⁸⁷ Finally, it is remarkable that the Qur'ān presents a policy which encourages Islamic domination over the Jews, the Christians and all other adherents of revealed religions.¹⁸⁸ In a very short period Muḥammad's influence permeated much of the Arabian Peninsula. The old tribal society, prior to the rise of Islam, was soon replaced with the realization of the revelation brought by Muḥammad of a nation bound by the ties of Islamic brotherhood.¹⁸⁹ Muḥammad, following the conquest of Mecca, continued to dwell in Medina. Ten years after the hijrah he returned to Mecca for 'the farewell pilgrimage' in which only the faithful could engage. Muslim tradition considers the following Quranic words as constituting the substance of Muḥammad's farewell sermon:

...This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed my favour upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion.¹⁹⁰

When Muḥammad returned to Medina he was soon to prepare for another campaign to the north. Yet, in the midst of the preparations he contracted a fever and died in the month of June, 632. At Muḥammad's funeral service Abū Bakr addressed the assembled Muslims as follows:

...O Men, if you have been worshipping Muḥammad, then know that Muḥammad is dead. But if you have been worshipping God, then know that God is living and never dies.¹⁹¹

This brief address stands as testimony to the commendable spiritual legacy left by Muḥammad to those who knew him best.

It has been suggested that the symptoms of Muḥammad's last illness could have come about through poisoning. For example, the Christian scholar, William Muir (1819-1905), relates the following story:

...in the middle of the seventh year (A.H.) his (Muhammad's) system sustained a shock from partaking of poisoned meat at Kheibar, for which he was cupped, and the effects of which he is said to have complained of periodically ever after. Indeed the present attack was attributed by Mahomet himself directly to this cause. When he had been now for several days sick, the mother of Bishr (who had died from the effects of the same poison,) came to inquire after his health; she condoled with him on the violence of the fever, and remarked that the people said it was the pleurisy. 'Nay', answered Mahomet, 'the Lord would never permit that sickness to seize his Apostle, for it cometh of Satan. This, verily, is the effect of that which I ate at Kheibar, I and thy son.'¹⁹²

The above story portrays an incident at Khaybar (7th year A.H.) when a widow of the battle successfully served Muhammad with lamb which had been poisoned. However, according to the most reliable Muslim traditionist, Ibn Ishāq (704-768), Muhammad refused to eat the poisoned meat. Ibn Ishāq states:

...When the apostle had rested Zaynab d. al-Hārith, the wife of Sallām b. Mishkam prepared for him a roast lamb, having first inquired what joint he preferred. When she learned that it was the shoulder she put a lot of poison in it and poisoned the whole lamb. Then she brought it in and placed it before him. He took hold of the shoulder and chewed a morsel of it, but he did not swallow it. Bishr b. al-Barā' b. Ma'rūr who was with him took some of it as the apostle had done, but he swallowed it, while the apostle spat it out, saying. 'This bone tells me that it is poisoned'.¹⁹³

Thus, according to Ibn Ishāq, Muhammad did not partake of the poisoned meat in question. Nonetheless, Ibn Ishāq relates the following tradition:

...Marwān b. 'Uthmān b. Abū Sa'īd b. al-Mu'allā told me: The apostle had said in his illness of which he was to die when Umm Bishr d. al-Barā' came to visit him, 'O Umm Bishr, this is the time in which I feel a deadly pain from what I ate with your brother at Khaybar'.¹⁹⁴

Accordingly, perhaps it is reasonable to assume that Muḥammad's health was permanently damaged via his oral contact with the poisoned meat at Khaybar, and during his last illness he may have experienced symptoms related to the said incident. There is, however, no evidence to suggest that Muḥammad was poisoned immediately prior to his death.

Before concluding the present section on Muḥammad's ministry in Medina, there are several actions of Muḥammad, in addition to his treatment of the Jews as mentioned earlier, which Christians have tended to see as raising questions about his moral character. One is the murder in 624 of two Medinans, a man and a woman, both of whom had written poems in which Muḥammad was criticised. Watt, commenting on the poems in question, states:

...The tenor of the verses of both was that it was dishonourable for the people of Medina to allow an outsider to control their affairs, a man who confused right and wrong (perhaps an allusion to the violation of the sacred months), and who aimed at being king.¹⁹⁵

It is probable that Muḥammad was unaware of the plan to murder the said poets, but in the wake of the murders he voiced no words of abhorrence against such cruelty. Another event often seen, from the Christian viewpoint, as being of dubious moral character is the murder in 624 of the poet Ka'b Ibn Al 'Ashraf. Ka'b, the son of an Arab father and Jewish mother, was considered to be a member of his mother's clan al-Nadīr. After the Battle of Badr, Ka'b was terribly upset and frustrated because of Muḥammad's victory. Consequently, Ka'b published widely a series of anti-Muslim poems which were intended to dishonour Muḥammad. It appears that Muḥammad made no secret of the fact that he would like to silence Ka'b. In this regard, 'Alī states:

...Muḥammad is said to have arranged for some of his followers to bait Ka'b, who had recited sarcastic poems about the Prophet, by pretending

to have become disillusioned with Muḥammad. When Ka'b emerged from his house, he was brutally murdered and his head cast at Muḥammad's feet with the murderers crying, 'Allāhu Akbar', God is most Great!¹⁹⁶

Even allowing for the pagan Arab ruthless treatment of enemies¹⁹⁷, one still looks for compassion on the part of Muḥammad, but it is nowhere to be seen in the above account. Hence, for the Christian at least, the above-cited details provide yet another morally offensive incident in Muḥammad's life-story.

Similarly, the fact of Muḥammad's marriage to Zaynab creates moral problems for the Christian. In brief, Zaynab was married to Zayd, Muḥammad's adopted son. According to Arab law, the adopted son enjoyed the status of a natural son. Moreover, if the adopting parent were to marry the adopted son's wife such a union would be regarded as incest.¹⁹⁸ Yet, Muḥammad longed to marry Zaynab and such a prospect shocked many of the inhabitants of Medina. Nonetheless, a suitable Quranic revelation was given to Muḥammad to assure him that his proposed marriage to Zaynab had divine approval.¹⁹⁹

The next point to be noted is that Muḥammad practised monogamy as long as Khadījah, his first wife, lived. Muḥammad was around fifty years old when Khadījah died, and after her death he began to contract a number of marriages. All in all, Muḥammad married eleven wives not to mention his concubines. Certainly, polygamy was widely accepted in pagan Arabia. Haykal, referring to Muḥammad's various marriages, states:

...The marriages were in order to consolidate the ties of mutual brotherhood within the new Islamic community, to inaugurate social change, and to give encouragement to those who faced martyrdom.²⁰⁰

The above Muslim sentiments are entirely acceptable in respect of the pragmatic approach of Muḥammad. Nevertheless,

it is remarkable that Muḥammad, in violation of the Quranic advice on marriage, should marry eleven wives. Accordingly, the Qur'ān states:

...If ye fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly with the orphans, marry women of your choice, two, or three, or four. But if ye fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly with them, then only one, or a captive that your right hands possess. That will be more suitable, to prevent you from doing injustice.²⁰¹

Thus, it would appear that Muḥammad's accumulation of eleven wives was far in excess of the Quranic ruling on marriage. Eventually, however, Muḥammad was the recipient of another Quranic revelation which granted him approval in respect of his aforesaid practice of polygamy.²⁰²

The preceding paragraphs provide some insight, from a Christian viewpoint, into a number of historical incidents in the life-story of Muḥammad which appear to cast a shadow over his moral character. On the other hand, the present chapter of this thesis portrays, in historical perspective, many things which are deserving of praise in the life and ministry of Muḥammad. Additionally, the Muslim scholar, Mohamed Al-Nowaihi, enhances Muḥammad's moral character by relating some historical happenings with regard to Muḥammad's personality. For example, Al-Nowaihi states:

...Perhaps the greatest thing which demonstrates his true essence was the fact that he was especially kind to all lowly and despised people: slaves and servants, women, children and orphans. Even when he was at the summit of his success and power, he helped his house-folk in the performance of their menial duties. He darned his clothes and cobbled his sandals. He never found fault with his servants or rebuked them for any mistake. His personal servant Anas b. Malik relates that in ten years of service to Muḥammad, the Prophet never struck him, never said one harsh word to him, and never even frowned in his face.²⁰³

The question of Muḥammad's moral character is to be examined in theological perspective in the next chapter of this thesis.

The conclusion arrived at so far is that Muḥammad, even before his call to prophethood, was a man respected for his integrity. Gradually, Muḥammad became convinced that he was the recipient of a divine message, and he displayed courage in the face of persecution. Moreover, his readiness to change his point of view when the Jews and Christians failed to help him, and his skill as a politician call for admiration. Further, Muḥammad was capable of showing great warmth and kindness towards many persons with whom he had contact. However, the post-hijrah Muḥammad, in contrast to Jesus, opted for the use of the power-structure, and in so doing Islam was maintained by the use of force. Muḥammad's decision in favour of the power-structure was motivated by his longing to create peace. Nonetheless, once the power-structure was mobilised there could be no turning back, and the use of force was perhaps bound to create some morally offensive side-effects, as portrayed above. Yet, is there something in the work of Muḥammad which can find an echo in Christian experience. The following chapter of this thesis will present a critique of Muḥammad in Christian theological perspective from 661 A.D. to modern times.

CHAPTER TWO

MUHAMMAD IN CHRISTIAN THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS, 661 A.D. TO MODERN TIMES

Section 2.1: Christian Responses to Muḥammad: Seventh to Tenth Centuries

Christianity, from its advent, had presented itself as being in continuity with, and the fulfilment of, Judaism. The rise and success of Islam in the seventh century, and its claim to be the true religion of Abraham, demanded by its existence that Christianity should respond to the claims advanced by Muslims with regard to Muḥammad, 'the messenger of God'. In order to appreciate the content and ethos of the early written Christian responses to Muḥammad it will be necessary to investigate the historical context in which these writers lived and worked.

From 632 to 661 the Rāshidūn (i.e. 'the rightly guided') were the first four successors (caliphs)¹ of Muḥammad, ruling from Medina², namely, Abū Bakr³ (632 to 634), 'Umar (634 to 644), 'Uthman (644 to 656), and 'Alī (656 to 661). After Muḥammad's death, Islamic rule was quickly re-established over Arabia, and the message of Islam was propagated beyond the boundaries of the Arabian peninsula. In a remarkably short time⁴, Persia, Syria and Egypt, with their Christian communities, were subjected to Islamic control. In Arab territories, prior to the rise of Islam, Christianity had penetrated paganism, but usually in Monophysite⁵ form. Further, neither eastern nor western Catholicism could find a compromise with the Monophysites in the sixth and seventh centuries. As it happened, Islam appeared as a form of Monophysite religion, and included the doctrine of the sword to accommodate the Arabs' practical needs. Cragg, commenting on the rise of Islam, states:

...Among the factors contributing to the rise of Islam was the failure of the Christian Church. It was a failure of the spirit. Truth, as often

before and after, was involved to its hurt in the spiritual fault of its trustees. Islam developed in an environment of imperfect Christianity and later by its own inner force gathered such strength as to become, and remain, essentially at odds with the pure faith beyond the imperfection.⁶

In the early stages of the Islamic conquest, Muslims made no attempt to propagate their faith amongst their subjects except those of the Arab race. Eventually, the Muslims called on Christians, Zoroastrians and Jews to pay a poll tax (jizyah)⁷ in return for protection provided by Islamic law. Hence, the subject peoples were referred to, by the Muslims, as 'protected persons' (ahl al-dhimmah; dhimmīs)⁸. The reality of life for dhimmīs, in the wake of the Ordinance of 'Umar⁹, is portrayed by Swartz as follows:

Jewish and Christian physicians, for example, were not to practice their profession among Muslims. Dhimmi merchants were to pay double the amount of duty for goods imported. Moreover, Christians and Jews were not to erect new houses of worship, though they were allowed to keep the old ones in a state of good repair. Perhaps more seriously of all, dhimmis were required to indicate their identity by wearing special badges or styles of clothing.¹⁰

In practice, however, many of the above mentioned restrictions were not always enforced¹¹, and dhimmīs enjoyed a quality of life almost comparable to the status of Muslims.

Without doubt, many Jewish and Christian communities welcomed the advancing Muslim armies.¹² Nonetheless, many Christians did not happily submit to Muslim rule.¹³ Christians were in the majority only in Alexandria and various Syrian cities. Naturally, there were periods of difficulty and persecution, but there was never, at any stage, a mass demand for the Christians under Muslim rule to be liberated. All in all, under the Rāshidūn (632-661) the Muslim community was absorbed in the formation of its own identity as it began to

expand beyond the boundaries of the Arabian peninsula. Yet, during the period in question, Arabia remained as the focus for Muslims. Indeed, under 'Umar, Arab leaders were forbidden to settle outside Arabia.¹⁴ Thus, there was little opportunity for any real dialogue between Christians and Muslims.

In 661 the Umayyads came into power and ruled until 749. They moved their centre of administration to Damascus in order to discover and organise their new empire. The Umayyads continued to identify the Islamic community with Arab society, so that conversion into Islam entailed entry into an Arab clan as mawlā. Gradually, the Umayyads organised a series of Islamic conquests over the Indus (711), Spain (711), and into France (732). The Muslims established themselves as military rulers in charge of old societies which were intellectually and culturally superior to the customs of Arabia. After all, in the Oriental Christian world of the seventh century there was, amongst the elite, a high degree of learning in many subjects, including theology. In contrast, the Islamic community during this period was, for the most part, illiterate and familiar only with the traditions of Arabia. Muslim scholars needed tuition in sciences. Hence, a Muslim Library was established by Khālīd b. Yazīd, and Christian academics were employed to translate Greek books, mainly relating to chemistry, into Arabic.

In 749 the fourteenth Umayyad caliph was overthrown by a new regime, which was known as the 'Abbāsīd dynasty (749-1258).¹⁵ The revolution by which the 'Abbāsīds rose to power was prompted by social and economic discontents of elements of the population who felt that they were being exploited by other members of the Islamic community.¹⁶ Thus, the 'Abbāsīds portrayed themselves as religious reformers in opposition to the Umayyads. Eventually, the 'Abbāsīds moved their capital from Damascus to a purpose-built city called Baghdad, which was an old centre of Judaism.

The period of the 'Abbāsid dynasty brought both enthusiasm for, and rejection of, Greek culture. For example, in 832 caliph al-Ma'mūn founded the Bayt al-Ḥikmah, a Muslim institution where books were translated and stored. A Nestorian Christian, Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq (808 to 873), was the director of the Bayt al-Ḥikmah, and during his directorship he translated more than one hundred and fifty books from Greek into Arabic. These books were chiefly to do with science, but the Greek text of the Old Testament (Septuagint) was also translated into Arabic. When al Mutawakkil became caliph (847 to 861) he restored Orthodox Islam, and the Bayt al-Ḥikmah was probably destroyed via the general persecution of Christians instigated by the said caliph in 852. Nonetheless, Greek philosophical notions were employed by Muslim thinkers, in the ninth and tenth centuries, to express Islamic thought. The Islamic rejection of Greek modes of thought is portrayed in the clash between the Mu'tazilites and Ash'arites.¹⁷ The Muslim perspective on this point is expressed by Nasr as follows:

...Meanwhile, towards the end of the third (tenth C.E.) century, Abu' l-Hasan al-Ash'arī, who had himself been a Mu'tazilite, rebelled against their views and founded the dominant Ash'arite school of theology...Opposed to the rationalistic tendency of the Mu'tazilites, Ash'arite theology believed in the subservience of reason to revelation but nevertheless encouraged a rational understanding of the faith.¹⁸

Therefore, from the above sentiments, it is evident that Muslims, in the ninth and tenth centuries, were keen to explore Greek culture. At the same time, however, Muslims were becoming sensitised to the fact that Greek philosophy could impinge upon the notion of Revelation, and dialogue with Christians might expose Muslims to abstract thought-forms which, in turn, could damage Islam.

In conclusion, Christians under Muslim rule, with regard to the period under review, were permitted to practise their

religion, but they did not enjoy complete equality with Muslims. Moreover, there were periods when Christians endured persecution from their Muslim rulers. From 661 Christian writers¹⁹ have responded to Islam on a theological level by elucidating its relationship to Christianity. In the following paragraphs, of the present section, we shall present a critical analysis of Muḥammad in Christian theological perspective from 661 to the end of the tenth century.

First in order of time stands the Armenian bishop Sebeos, whose History of Heraclius, most likely finished in 661, appears to contain the earliest reference to Muḥammad in Christian literature. Sebeos states:

...After the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius had defeated the Persians his troops came to Edessa, but when they tried to take the city they encountered opposition from the Jews. Ultimately the Byzantines captured the city, whereupon the Jews took the desert road to Arabia and asked the Arabs for help, explaining that according to the Bible the children of Ishmael, by whom the Arabs were meant, were related to themselves. Their appeal was not successful.

...However, at about that time one of the children of Ishmael, the merchant Muḥammad, began preaching to his people. Being very learned and well-versed in the Law of Moses, he taught them to know the God of Abraham. They accepted his preaching, and abandoning the cults of vanity, turned back to the living God who had revealed himself to their father Abraham.

...Muḥammad told the people that they should not eat the flesh of animals found dead, drink wine, lie or commit fornication, and explained that God was to realise in them the promise made to Abraham and his posterity, from which it followed that they were to seize hold of the territory God gave Abraham.²⁰

The above account portrays the Jews and Arabs in dialogue during the early period of Muḥammad's ministry. Indeed, during the reign of the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius (610 to

641) the Jews of the Near East were subjected to extreme persecution. For instance, following the Byzantine victory over the Persians in 629 many of the Jews of Jerusalem were executed. Further, in the year 632 Heraclius proscribed the public exercise of Judaism and commanded that all Jews, within his jurisdiction, should submit to the rite of Christian baptism.²¹ Moreover, Sebeos presents both Jews and Arabs as being in mutual agreement with regard to the Arabs' claim to Abrahamic ancestry. As stated in the first chapter of this thesis, the Jews of Medina rejected Muḥammad on racial and religious grounds. However, the favourable relations between the Jews and Arabs, as presented by Sebeos, may reflect²² an attempt by the Jews to counter so-called Christian persecution of Jewish communities. Swartz, commenting on the Jewish response to the Arab conquest of the Near East, states:

...The sources are replete with moving accounts of the assistance rendered by these Jewish communities. In many areas the Arab armies were openly and enthusiastically welcomed as 'liberators' from the oppressive rule of Christian overlords. And the Arabs, for their part soon came to regard these Jewish communities as allies in a common cause.²³

Rabbi Simon bar Yohai, relating Jewish thought during the period in question, refers to 'Umar, the second caliph (634 to 644), as:

...The Holy One who is only bringing the Kingdom of Ishmael in order to help you from the wicked one (Christian).²⁴

According to Sebeos, Muḥammad was an Ishmaelite, educated in the Law of Moses, who claimed to be a prophet and instructed his fellow countrymen to return to the religion of Abraham. However, to designate Muḥammad as an 'Ishmaelite' is to distort the essential message of Islam. As previously stated, Muslims do not adhere to, or worship, mere personages like Abraham or Ishmael. On the contrary, Muslims espouse

submission to God alone. From Islam's infancy, Muslims have regarded Ishmael, the son born to Hagar and Abraham, as the ancestor of the Arabs. Yet, there is no historical evidence²⁵ to suggest that Abraham or Ishmael was ever in Mecca. The said Muslim notion, however, serves to provide Islam with an ancient foundation. Thus, Watt states:

...Islam may not tally with what objectively we consider the religion of Abraham to have been. But Islam belongs in a sense to the Judaeo-Christian tradition, and that tradition may be described as the tradition which begins with Abraham. Islam is thus a form of the religion of Abraham a form, too, well suited to the outlook of men whose way of life was closer to Abraham than that of the bulk of Jews and Christians.²⁶

Sebeos assumes that Muḥammad was very familiar with the Law of Moses. Undoubtedly, the Qur'ān repeats many details found in the Old Testament, and complete portions of the Pentateuch are paraphrased in a few of its chapters. Nonetheless, the Qur'ān, in contrast to the Old Testament, presents the children of Israel returning to Egypt²⁷, and changes are made in the chronology of the prophets.²⁸ Hence, even though it is obvious that Muḥammad had heard some of the contents of the Old Testament, there seems to be no doubt that all of his knowledge was acquired from teachings and stories related to him by Jews and Christians. It would appear, therefore, that Sebeos was mistaken when he asserted that Muḥammad was well versed in the Law of Moses. In general, it may be said that Sebeos was constructive in his response to Muḥammad. Moorhead, commenting on this point, states:

...Sebeos seems to have accepted the connection between God's Old Dispensation and the Arabs of his time, and as he asserts without comment that Muḥammad taught them to know God, and that they turned back to the living God, we may assume that these expressions represent not merely a re-telling of what the Arabs believed concerning the status of their religion, but an implicit endorsement of the status they claimed for it. In short, it is a particularly positive view of Islam.²⁹

Sebeos goes on to speak of Muḥammad as, 'the great ally of Antichrist'.³⁰ In this regard, Moorhead states:

...but these expressions are to be taken as the utterances of an Armenian patriot, and as possessed of a political rather than theological significance. Sebeos' evaluation of Islam was positive.³¹

The term Antichrist was employed in the first written Christian response to Muḥammad. Moreover, can the use of the said term be dismissed, as Moorhead suggests, as political rhetoric? In the New Testament the name Antichrist occurs only in the Letters of John.³² Paul gives a very full description of the working of Antichrist under the name of the man of sin.³³ In the Apocalypse³⁴ the characteristics of the traditional Antichrist are divided between the Beast, who is Rome, and the False Prophet who parodies Christ and performs the lying wonders. The Christian scholar, M.R. James, commenting on the identity of Antichrist, states:

...The clearest of the utterances of our Lord and of St. John point to a plurality of antichrists who are to appear in different ages of the Church's growth - rather to movements and tendencies of a kind hostile to Christianity, than to any one well defined personality.³⁵

Thus, the term Antichrist was, from the first century, well known in Christian circles. It may be argued that Sebeos' use of the term in question was motivated by political loyalty to Armenia following the Islamic conquest. Nevertheless, the fact that Sebeos employed the name Antichrist in his response to Muḥammad is perhaps indicative of his emerging theological assessment of Islam. According to Moorhead, as already stated, Sebeos' evaluation of Islam was positive. Yes, but the said evaluation was positive only within the limits of Sebeos' knowledge of Islam. From the above paragraphs, it is clear that Sebeos had a limited understanding of Islam and Muḥammad. After all, the fixation of the Qur'ān, begun under Abū Bakr (632 to 634), was only

completed by ʿUthmān around 650. Sebeos appears to have had no knowledge of the text of the Qurʾān, or of Islamic tradition.

Next, towards the end of the seventh century, the Egyptian bishop, John of Nikiu, penned a fierce attack on Muḥammad. Commenting on the defection of false Christians to Islam in the face of the Islamic conquest of Egypt, John states:

...they denied the holy and orthodox faith and embraced the religion of the Moslem, the enemies of God, and accepted the detestable doctrine of the beast, that is Muhammad, and they erred together with their idolations.³⁶

The above reference to 'the beast' is, in all probability, a clear echo of the language of the Apocalypse³⁷ where 'the beast' is often identified with Antichrist. Therefore, once again Muḥammad is equated, in early Christian thought, with the notion of Antichrist. Indeed, the response of John of Nikiu to Muḥammad is theological with no hint of any ulterior political motives, as perhaps was the case with Sebeos. Nonetheless, John, like Sebeos, responded to Muḥammad without any fundamental knowledge of Islamic theology. It is strange, however, that John should refer to Muḥammad and the Muslims as being guilty of idolatry. Such an accusation is without foundation. Yet, the importance of the Kaʿbah and the Black Stone within Islam may have prompted John of Nikiu to level the charge of idolatry against Muḥammad and the Muslims. However, the Muslims' wish to face Mecca, and the existence of the Kaʿbah, both serve to remind Muslims of the pure monotheism espoused by Ibrāhīm (Abraham). Thus, it is absurd to claim that Muḥammad and the Muslims were guilty of idolatry.

John of Nikiu's contemporary the Monophysite Syrian scholar, Jacob of Edessa (640 to 708), was convinced that Muslims were ignorant of the Christian understanding of God. Hence, Jacob

states:

...they do not acknowledge God to be God; and Christ, the Son of God, to be God and the Son of God.³⁸

From the Monophysite viewpoint, the above sentiments on the nature of God are entirely legitimate, but the said thoughts are, nevertheless, abstract and arrogant. The Muslim world had not yet perfected its Arabic vocabulary to embrace abstract thought-forms. Consequently, the statement of Jacob of Edessa, as presented above, is subjected to a particular Christian perspective which could not be accommodated within the Islamic mind of the late seventh century. In short, Jacob of Edessa was negative in his response to Islam.

Another example of a hostile Christian response to Islam is found in a statement of the Catholicus Anajesus to the caliph 'Abd al-Malik (685 to 705). Anajesus, commenting on Islam, states:

...It is a kingdom established by the sword and not a faith confirmed by miracles, as the Christian faith and the old law of Moses.³⁹

According to tradition,⁴⁰ the caliph 'Abd al-Malik wanted to have the Catholicus' tongue removed as punishment for his critique of Islam. However, Anajesus successfully appealed against such a harsh judgement and was released without harm. In contrast, Anajesus' contemporary, Peter of Maiuma, was executed by the Muslims because of his sustained verbal attack on, 'Muhammad, his mythography and all who believe in it'.⁴¹ The implication of the above thoughts, as expressed by Anajesus, is that Islam, having no divine sanction, sought refuge in physical force to establish its credentials as a religion. Whereas the law of Moses and Christianity both enjoyed divine confirmation by miracles. Yes, from the human perspective, Islam was sometimes propagated by the use of physical force, but the means by which it was advanced does

not necessarily imply that Islam is inherently flawed as a system of belief.

Furthermore, the miracles wrought by Moses are, from the Christian viewpoint, open to question in respect of historicity and significance.⁴² Also, early Christian apologists, as for example, Origen (185 to 254), used the miracles in the New Testament as evidence of Jesus' divinity. Origen states:

...Undoubtedly we do think him to be the Christ, and the Son of God, because he healed the lame and the blind⁴³.

Thus, in the past, including the period in which Anajesus responded to Islam, the miracles of Jesus were portrayed by some Christians as being proof of the divinity of Jesus. The truth, however, is that such a view can find no support from the New Testament. That is to say, Jesus repeatedly refused to perform miracles for the sake of the authorities.⁴⁴ In reality Jesus was aware that miracles did not prove a great deal.⁴⁵

The conclusion arrived at so far is that from 661 until the early eighth century various Christian writers responded to Islam and Muḥammad in a variety of ways. Some Christians, on spurious evidence, utterly rejected Muḥammad and branded him as Antichrist. On the other hand, a few Christians were positive in their response to Islam, and suggested that it was from God and in continuity with Judaism. Still, all of this having been said, it is clear that, during the period under review, the Qur'ān was not readily available, nor was Christian knowledge of Islam and Muḥammad sufficient in order to make an educated and objective Christian response to the same. In brief, the above mentioned Christian responses, both positive and critical, were made in a climate of ignorance with regard to the essential message of Islam.

John of Damascus (c. 675 to c. 749)

According to Christian scholars⁴⁶ the writings of John of Damascus provide the earliest Christian theological critique of Islam. John was born of a wealthy Christian family and his grandfather, Maṣṣūr b. Serḡūn, was governor of Damascus when the city, under Byzantine rule, was relinquished to Arab control in 635. John, originally called Maṣṣūr b. Serḡūn as his grandfather, worked for the Umayyads in the area of administration. In or around the year 724 he terminated his employment and became a priest, taking the name of John. John found his priestly vocation within the Christian Church, and during the early stages of the Iconoclastic Controversy⁴⁷ he proved to be a strong defender of icons and a champion of orthodoxy.

John's writings on Islam are extant in his major theological work, The Fount of Knowledge. This work was written in order to present Christianity to Christians. Hence, in only one chapter of the said work, John deals with Islam under the section entitled, De Haeresibus: False Beliefs. John states:

...There is also the still-prevailing deceptive superstition of the Ishmaelites, the fore-runner of the Antichrist. It takes its origin from Ishmael who was born to Abraham from Hagar, and that is why they also call them Hagarenes and Ishmaelites. They also call them Saracenes, allegedly for having been sent away by Sarah empty; for Hagar said to the angel, 'Sarah has sent me away empty'.

These, then, were idolaters and they venerated the morning star and Aphrodite, whom notably they called Habar in their own language, which means 'great'; therefore until the times of Heraclius they were, undoubtedly, idolaters. From that time on a false prophet appeared among them, surnamed Mameth, who, having casually been exposed to the Old and the New Testament and supposedly encountered an Arian monk, formed a heresy of his own.

And after, by pretence, he managed to make the people think of him as a God-fearing fellow, he spread rumours that a scripture was brought down to him from heaven. Thus, having drafted some pronouncements in his book, worthy only of laughter, he handed it down to them in order that they may comply with it.⁴⁸

From the above comments, it is clear from the outset that John of Damascus treats Islam as a Christian heresy, and a precursor (prodromos) of Antichrist. Merrill, commenting on John's use of the term Antichrist, states:

...The coming of Antichrist occupied a prominent place in his own thoughts, and in that of his times, and seems to have been connected with the Arabs. Mingana describes a Syriac document (Catalogue of Syriac MSS., N. 65) which treats of events at the end of the world, including the apparition of the Arabs from Yathrib and their defeat by the Greeks, and the apparition of Antichrist.⁴⁹

John goes on to explain that Muslims claim descent from Abraham, Hagar and Ishmael, and that is why the designations of Hagarenes and Ishmaelites are applied to Muslims. As previously stated, the use of these titles does not do justice to the originality of Islam. Further, John points out that Muslims are also called Saracenes, and he proceeds to explain that the name in question is derived from the words of Hagar to the angel, 'Sarah has sent me away empty', as stated above. Thus, John combines the words sarras kenoi⁵⁰ (cast away) empty by Sarah to create a curious etymology of the term Saracenes. Indeed, the above-mentioned dialogue between Hagar and the angel can find no parallel in the Hebrew scriptures. Accordingly, Genesis states:

...But Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, playing with her son Isaac. So she said to Abraham, 'Cast out this slave woman with her son; for the son of this slave woman shall not be heir with my son Isaac'.⁵¹

...So Abraham rose early in the morning, and took bread and a skin of water, and gave it to Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, along with the child, and sent her away.⁵²

The above verses are similar to the corresponding sentiments expressed by John of Damascus. However, contrary to what the term Saracene is interpreted to mean, it is clear that, according to Genesis, Hagar and Ishmael were not cast away empty, but were furnished with food and water before their expulsion. Hence, at this early stage it would appear that John of Damascus, in respect of the point in question, was less than thorough in his research into early Islam.

Furthermore, John is especially critical of the polytheistic and idolatrous practices of the pagan Arabs, prior to the rise of Islam. These pagan Arabs, according to John, worshipped the morning star and Aphrodite whom they called Habar.⁵³ In this regard, Merrill states:

...One wonders at the mention of the morning star and Aphrodite. The morning star was Venus-Aphrodite. In another place our author says that the Stone of Abraham at Mecca bears a likeness of Aphrodite. There was once at al-Hirah in Iraq an image of gold of Venus, which was worshipped by the Arabs, and was destroyed when their king accepted Christianity...Does the author have in mind a star-worship, and also a goddess - worship once prevalent among the Arabs of Syria?⁵⁴

In any case, John seems to infer that nothing of value could emerge from such a background. Yet, did not Judaism, from which Christianity developed, emanate from a polytheistic, idolatrous and pagan milieu?⁵⁵ For example, Joshua 24 describes an impressive public assembly at Shechem at which Joshua challenged the people to renew their commitment to the God of the Exodus. In particular, the people were exhorted to, 'put away the gods which you fathers served beyond the River (Euphrates) and in Egypt'.⁵⁶ Thus, the Exodus was not only a flight from political oppression, but was also a

departure from the religions of the ancient world. Consequently, Islam cannot be condemned simply because it emerged in pagan Arabia. In short, the religious environment of pre-Islamic Arabia cannot be used as an objective criterion with regard to the question of the legitimacy or illegitimacy of Islam. It is perhaps significant that John employs the past-tense when referring to the idolatrous practices of the pagan Arabs. Nonetheless, John portrays Muḥammad (Mameth)⁵⁷ as a false prophet who had some knowledge of the Bible. As shown in the first chapter of this thesis, Muslims do not deny that Muḥammad had contacts with Jews or Christians, but no link of dependence is accepted. Further, it is John's claim that Muḥammad was influenced by the heretical Christian monk Baḥīrā. From the Muslim perspective, however, the possibility of Muḥammad being in contact with Baḥīrā does not impinge on the process of divine revelation. It is the Muslim contention that the message conveyed by Muḥammad was not distorted by external circumstances.

All in all, John considers Islam only in its relation to Christianity and he portrays Muḥammad as a heretic and an impostor. However, such allegations fail to appreciate the reality and distinctiveness of Muḥammad's prophethood. Moreover, John ridicules the Qur'ān, but in all probability he had no access to the text of the same. Indeed, he seems to have been totally ignorant of the fact that the fixation of the Qur'ān was the product of great care, and only completed after Muḥammad's death.⁵⁸

In John's day copies of the Qur'ān were rare⁵⁹ and expensive, and to own a copy of the Qur'ān would have been contrary to his status of dhimmī. Thus, John appears to rehearse parts of the Qur'ān from memory without access to the written Quranic text. For instance, John's understanding of Muḥammad's Christology is as follows:

...He says that there exists one God maker of all, who was neither begotten nor has he

begotten. He says that Christ is the Word of God, and his spirit, created and a servant, and that he was born without a seed from Mary, the sister of Moses and Aaron. For, he says, the Word of God and the Spirit entered Mary and she gave birth to Jesus who was a prophet and a servant of God. And that the Jews, having themselves violated the Law, wanted to crucify him and after they arrested him they crucified his shadow, but Christ himself, they say, was not crucified nor did he die; for God took him up to himself into heaven because he loved him.

And this is what he says, that when Christ went up to the heavens God questioned him saying: 'O Jesus, did you say that I am Son of God, and God?' And Jesus, they say answered: 'Be merciful to me, Lord; you know that I did not say so, nor will I boast that I am your servant; but men who have gone astray wrote that I made this statement and they said lies against me and they have been in error'. And God, they say, answered him: 'I knew that you would not say this thing'.⁶⁰

The above comments show a great familiarity with the corresponding Quranic texts. Firstly, Johns's portrayal of the Islamic understanding of the nature of God is in complete harmony with the witness of the Qur'ān⁶¹, and some of the titles⁶² ascribed to Jesus in the Qur'ān are accurately related by John. Moreover, he points out that the Quranic portrayal of Mary's relatives⁶³ cannot be reconciled with the Biblical accounts.⁶⁴ It must be admitted that, despite Muslim efforts to solve the problem of relationship⁶⁵, it does appear that the Qur'ān confuses Mary the Mother of Jesus with Miriam the sister of Moses and Aaron. Further, John is familiar with the Islamic understanding of the destiny of Jesus which asserts that he escaped death and was taken up into heaven. This belief is by no means confirmed by the Qur'ān⁶⁶, but John is unfamiliar with the written text of the same. In addition, John's paraphrase of Qur'ān 5:119, relating to Jesus' post-ascension dialogue with God, is full of discrepancies with the Quranic text.

The next point to be noted is the fact that John questions the process of revelation by which the Qur'ān was imparted to

Muhammad. John states:

...We tell them that Moses received the Law by the Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people when God appeared in cloud and fire and darkness and storm; and that all the prophets, starting from Moses and onward, foretold of the advent of Christ and that Christ is God and that the Son of God will come by taking up flesh and that he will be crucified and that he will die and that he will be the judge of the living and of the dead alike.

...And when, then, we ask, 'How is it that your prophet did not come this way, by having others bearing witness to him, nor did - as in the case of Moses, that God gave the Law to him while the people were looking and the mountain was in smoke - God give him as well, as you claim, the scriptures in your presence so that you, too, have an assurance?' They reply that God does whatever he pleases. 'This' we say 'is what we also know; but how did the scripture come down to your prophet, this is what we are asking'. And they answer that, while he was asleep the scripture came down upon him. Then we say to them in jest that, well since while asleep he received the scripture and he did not have a sense of this event taking place, it is on him that the folk⁶⁷ proverb was fulfilled...⁶⁸

John, via the above sentiments, ridicules the Qur'ān, but his critique is made in ignorance of the written Quranic text. He goes on to contrast Moses with Muḥammad. According to the above quotation, Moses communed with God and received the Law in full public view, whereas Muḥammad was without witnesses in respect of receiving the Qur'ān. According to the Hebrew scriptures, Israel encamped at the base of Mount Sinai, and John is correct in relating that the Hebrew people experienced the theophany in public. But, according to Exodus, Moses ascended the mountain alone to commune with God and receive the terms of the Ten Commandments.⁶⁹ Moreover, following the sacred ceremony and feast to seal the covenant between God and the people⁷⁰, Moses returned alone to the mountain for forty days and nights to receive the stone

tablets bearing the Ten Commandments.⁷¹ Therefore, the book Exodus portrays Moses as receiving a divine message via private communion with God on Mount Sinai. Likewise, according to the Qur'ān, Muḥammad was the recipient of a 'divine message which he received in solitary retirement and without the solace of any human company. Thus, it would seem that John's textual knowledge of even the Hebrew scriptures was limited.

Also, John is of the opinion that all the Hebrew prophets foretold of the coming, death, resurrection and future rôle of Christ. Moreover, according to John, Muḥammad had no such prophecies to establish his credentials.⁷² However, are the said prophecies about Christ as clear and significant as John suggests? During the New Testament period it was believed that the Immanuel prophecy of Isaiah⁷³ was fulfilled in Jesus Christ, to whom was given the name 'God is with us'. Brown, commenting on this so-called prophecy, states:

...The prophet was referring to the birth of a child taking place some seven hundred years before Jesus' time, a child whose coming into the world was a sign of the continuance of the royal Davidic line...It was a proof for Matthew who had an insight as to how Jesus' birth fulfilled God's plan; but, so far as we can tell Isaiah knew nothing or foresaw nothing about Jesus' birth.⁷⁴

Indeed, Matthew interprets numerous⁷⁵ Old Testament texts as prophecies about Jesus, even though originally these texts had nothing to do with Jesus, and were never intended to have anything to do with him. In reality this method of scriptural interpretation, absurd as it may appear, was used by the rabbis of Jesus' time, and by the community at Qumran.⁷⁶ The mode of scriptural interpretation in question is used by Muslims to express their belief that the Bible contains prophecies in respect of the advent of Muḥammad. These alleged prophecies will be analysed in detail in the next chapter of this thesis.

Furthermore, with regard to the notion of the Old Testament scriptures relating to Christ, Paul states:

...For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures.⁷⁷

Nevertheless, what scriptures were they that Paul, and his apostolic colleagues, believed to have been fulfilled in the death of Christ? Some think that the central passage in mind is the prophecy of the Suffering Servant of the Lord as found in Isaiah.⁷⁸ Still, the evidence in favour of such an identification is ambiguous.⁷⁹ The scriptural testimony to the resurrection of Christ, as stated above, may⁸⁰ be related to a verse in Hosea as follows:

...After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up.⁸¹

Yet, when Hosea delivered this verse in the eighth century B.C. he had no fore-knowledge of Christianity, or of the Christian belief in Christ's resurrection. Hence, it is reasonable to assume that these claims of fulfilment of scripture are the product of Christian thought in respect of the rôle of the Old Testament in the light of the Christ-event. John of Damascus, in an attempt to elevate Christ above Muḥammad, uses the above-mentioned prophecies in favour of Christ, but such usage does not provide absolute proof of the supremacy of Christ.

Next, John of Damascus relates that the prophets foretold that 'Christ is God' and 'the Son of God'. But the notion of the divinity of Christ can find no explicit support from the Old Testament. For example, Pannenberg states:

...The title 'Son of God' was connected in ancient Israel with the inauguration of the king,

which occurred as adoption by Yahweh (Ps. 2:7). It implied there, as well as in the earliest Christian community, a clear subordination of the messiah to God. Only in Gentile Christianity did the title 'Son of God' become a statement about the participation of Jesus in the divine essence.⁸²

Further, does the title Son of God go back to Jesus himself? Barrett states that 'the doctrine of sonship played no part in the public proclamation of Jesus.'⁸³ Also, commenting on the relevant New Testament material, Conzelmann relates that 'according to the texts we have Jesus did not use the title Son of God'.⁸⁴ Finally, Casey, in his recent work on Christology, considers that the term Son of God 'belongs to the early church rather than the Jesus of history'.⁸⁵ Therefore, it would appear that John of Damascus assumes too much when he portrays the Old Testament prophets as lending support to the Christian notion of the divinity of Christ.

The next point to be noted is that John of Damascus ridicules the Muslim belief that Muḥammad was asleep when he received the first revelations of the Qur'ān. John refuses to consider the worth of the Qur'ān because of the process of revelation, as referred to above. Still, according to the New Testament⁸⁶, the Apostle Peter was asleep, or in a trance, when he was the recipient of a divine message. Thus, once again John displays an uncritical acceptance of Biblical material which is not compatible with the standards of criticism which he employs against Muḥammad and the Qur'ān.

John continues his assessment of Muḥammad as follows:

...When again we ask them, "How is it that, although in your scripture he commanded not to do anything or receive anything without witnesses you did not ask him 'You first prove with witnesses that you are a prophet and that you came from God, and which scripture testifies about you', they remain silent because of shame.

And this is because the one who handed it down to you does not have any certification from anywhere, nor is there any one known who testified about him in advance, but he, furthermore, received this while asleep.

...Moreover they call us Associators because, they say, we introduce beside God an associate to Him by saying that Christ is the Son of God and God. To whom we answer, that this is what the prophets and the Scripture have handed down to us; and you, as you claim, accept the prophets. If, therefore, we wrongly say that Christ is Son of God they also were wrong, who taught and handed it down to us so. And some of them maintain that we have added such things, by having allegorized the prophets. Others hold that the Jews, out of hatred, deceived us with writings which supposedly originated from the prophets so that we might get lost.⁸⁷

From the above text it is clear that, according to John, anything of value is verified by witnesses, and Muḥammad and the Quranic revelation are without such verification and, thereby, are worthless. The Qur'ān itself deals with the question of Muḥammad's credentials. The Qur'ān states:

...The unbelievers say, 'No apostle are thou'. Say, 'Enough for a witness between me and you is God, and such as have knowledge of the Book'.⁸⁸

A. Yūsuf 'Alī, commenting on the above verse, states:

...The enemies of Islam have to acknowledge that Muḥammad was a great and noble character, but they deny his apostleship. He could point to his credentials from God in the work which he achieved, and the Qur'ān which he brought.⁸⁹

As already shown, John of Damascus displays no detailed knowledge of the written text of the Qur'ān. Consequently, he is unable to make an impartial and accurate Christian response to Islam. In short, John's window on Islam is insufficient for him to evaluate Muḥammad and the Qur'ān objectively. Also, John deals with the Muslim accusation that Christians mistakenly associate Christ with God. Once

again, John takes refuge in the Christian belief that the notion of Christ as the Son of God was foretold by the Hebrew prophets. As previously shown, the Christian appeal to Old Testament prophecy provides no absolute endorsement of the claims advanced by Christians with regard to Jesus of Nazareth. Further, in the above text, John refers to the Muslim claim that Christians have falsified their scriptures via interpretation (tahrīf ma 'hawī); and that the Jews, because of their hatred of Christians, have falsified the text of some of the prophetic books (tahrīf al-lafz). These Muslim accusations about the Bible are worthy of consideration, and shall be analysed in detail in the next chapter of this thesis.

John, in the next section of his response to Islam, states:

...Again we respond to them: 'Since you say that Christ is Word and Spirit of God, how do you scold us as Associators? For the Word and the Spirit is inseparable each from the one in whom this has the origin; if, therefore, the Word is in God it is obvious that he is God as well. If, on the other hand, this is outside of God, then God, according to you, is without word and without spirit. Thus, trying to avoid making associates to God you have mutilated Him...Therefore, by accusing us falsely, you call us Associators; we, however, call you Mutilators (Coptas) of God'.⁹⁰

The above comments show John as one broadly familiar with some tenets of Quranic Christology. However, his resulting argument is seriously flawed because he attempts to interpret the Qur'ān from the Christian perspective. In this regard, O'Shaughnessy states:

...John's argument is unanswerable, if 'word' is understood of God in its Christian sense. But as it stands it is but another testimony to the traditional Christian belief, since no Muslim who knew the Qur'ān and its commentators would grant such a meaning.⁹¹

To put it another way, in the Qur'ān Jesus is spoken of as Word (kalimah)⁹², a title which he alone possesses. All in all, Muslims present the Qur'ān as the supreme Word of God, and Jesus, from the Muslim perspective, is only a particular Word from God. Moreover, the Quranic Jesus, in common with all firm believers, is strengthened with a spirit from God.⁹³ Therefore, the titles in question, as applied to Jesus in the Qur'ān, do not imply that he is more than a man or a prophet. Consequently, John's reference to the Muslims as being Mutilators (Coptas) of God is absurd.

John continues by levelling the charge of idolatry against the Muslims as follows:

...They also defame us as being idolaters because we venerate the cross, which they despise; and we respond to them: 'How is it that you rub yourselves against a stone by your Habathan, and you express your adoration to the stone by kissing it?' And some of them answer that (because) Abraham had intercourse with Hagar on it; others, because he tied the camel around it when he was about to sacrifice Isaac...Then we respond: 'Suppose that it is of Abraham, as you foolishly maintain; are you not ashamed to kiss it for the only reason that Abraham had intercourse with a woman, or because he tied his camel to it, and yet you blame us for venerating the cross of Christ, through which the power of the demons and the deceit of the devil have been destroyed?'⁹⁴

As previously stated, the Ka'bah, after it was purified of idolatry by Muḥammad, was retained within Islam and the Black Meteorite stone⁹⁵ embedded in one of its walls was, and is, of great significance to Muslims. According to the Qur'ān, Ibrāhīm (Abraham) is regarded as the rebuilder of the Ka'bah in Mecca after its destruction by the Flood. Moreover, Muslims believe that the Black Stone was the stone Ismā'īl (Ishmael) handed to his father Ibrāhīm (Abraham) to mark the starting point where pilgrims would begin their circumambulation of the Ka'bah during the great pilgrimage.

The above critique of 'the stone' by John of Damascus is based upon pagan rumour and conjecture. In any case, Muḥammad purified the Ka'bah of all pagan influences, including whatever rumours had developed with regard to the Black Stone. Certainly, Muslims touch and kiss the Black Stone, but such practices should not be seen as constituting idolatry. Muslims, via their understanding of the Black Stone, are expressing their allegiance to the pure monotheism as presented by Ibrāhīm (Abraham) and restated by Muḥammad.

Next, John of Damascus analyses the question of Muḥammad's personal morality. John states:

...This Muḥammad, as it has been mentioned, composed many idle tales, on each one of which he prefixed a title, like for example the discourse of The Woman, in which he clearly legislates that one may have four wives and one thousand concubines if he can, as many as he can maintain beside the four wives; and that one can divorce whomsoever he pleases, if he so wishes, and have another one. He made this law because of the following case: Muḥammad had a comrade named Zaid. This man had a beautiful wife with whom Muhammad fell in love. While they were once sitting together Muhammad said to him: 'Oh you, God commanded me to take your wife'. And he replied, 'You are an apostle; do as God has told you; take my wife'. Or rather, in order to tell the story from the beginning, he said to him: 'God commanded me to tell you that you should divorce your wife', and he divorced her.

Several days later he said, 'But now God commanded me that I should take her'. Then after he took her and committed adultery with her he made such a law: 'Whosoever wills may dismiss his wife. But if, after the divorce, he wants to return back to her let someone else marry her first. For it is not permitted for him to take her back unless she is married by somebody else.'⁹⁶

From the above text it is obvious that John has no doubts as to the utter deficiency of Muḥammad's morality in respect of the episode with Zayd's wife Zaynab. Zaynab, an ambitious woman⁹⁷ was Muḥammad's cousin, and following the hijrah she

was compelled by Muḥammad to marry his adopted son Zayd. According to Muslim tradition, Muḥammad was later attracted to Zaynab and wished to marry her. John's understanding of the story in question is incorrect. That is, the Qur'ān, in contrast to John's account of the said incident, shows Muḥammad urging Zayd to keep his wife. The Qur'ān states:

...Behold! Thou didst say to one who had received the grace of God and thy favour, 'Retain thou in wedlock thy wife, and fear God'. But thou didst hide in thy heart that which God was about to make manifest, thou didst fear the people, but it is more fitting that thou shouldst fear God. Then when Zayd had dissolved his marriage with her, with the necessary formality, We joined her in marriage to thee in order that in future there would be no difficulty to the believers in the matter of marriage with the wives of their adopted sons, when the latter have dissolved with the necessary formality their marriage with them. And God's command must be fulfilled.⁹⁸

Indeed, for many of the people of Medina Muḥammad's marriage to Zaynab was controversial because it was incestuous in nature. Accordingly, Watt comments:

...What was criticized in this marriage was its incestuous character. It was incest for a man to marry a woman who had once been married to his son, and an adoptive son was counted as a real son. It was this that aroused many of the people of Medina against Muḥammad...

...More than this can hardly be said. This item of social reform was desirable, but was it urgent? Or was the marriage with Zainab urgent for some political reason of which we are not aware? We cannot tell. But both politics and social reform were involved, and at most only a minor rôle can have been left for romantic love.⁹⁹

In the light of Watt's comments, it is reasonable to suggest that Muḥammad was justified in acting as he did toward Zayd and Zaynab. Certainly, from the Arab viewpoint, Muḥammad contravened the law with regard to incest. But the law in question was in need of reform which came via the Qur'ān.

Further, John's critique of the Quranic laws on divorce, as presented above, is illogical and based only upon snippets of the relevant Quranic text. The Qur'ān states:

...So if a husband divorces his wife irrevocably, he cannot, after that, re-marry her until after she has married another husband and he has divorced her. In that case there is no blame on either of them if they re-unite, provided they feel that they can keep the limits ordained by God. Such are the limits ordained by God, which He made plain to those who understand.¹⁰⁰

Hence, the Quranic legislation on divorce, as cited above, portrays the seriousness of divorce. A. Yūsuf 'Alī, commenting on this point, states:

...Two divorces followed by re-union are permissible. The third time the divorce becomes irrevocable, until the woman marries some other man and he divorces her. This is to set an almost impossible condition. The lesson is, if a man loves a woman he should not allow a sudden gust of temper or anger to induce him to take hasty action.¹⁰¹

It is clear enough then that John of Damascus was too severe in his assessment of Muḥammad in relation to the matters under review. John, without any detailed knowledge of the written text of the Qur'ān, propagated an inaccurate appraisal of Muḥammad's personal morality. If John had had access to the Quranic text his analysis of Muḥammad may have been more objective and positive.

Next, John of Damascus turns his attention to the discourse of The Camel of God. John states:

...Again, there is the discourse of The Camel of God, about which he says that there was a camel from God and that she used to drink the whole river so that she could not pass between two mountains because there was not enough room for

her to go through. There were people in that place, he says, and on the one day they were drinking the water and the camel on the next.

Those people, then, being evil, rose up and killed the camel. There was, however, a small camel which was her offspring which, he says, when her mother was killed cried out to God and He took her up to Himself. And we say to them: 'Where was that camel from?' And they answer that she was from God. And we say: 'Was there any other camel that coupled with her?' And they say, 'No'. 'How, then', we say 'she gave an offspring?' In your story there appears neither the one who coupled with the she-camel, nor where the young camel was taken up.¹⁰²

The story of the she-camel is found in the Qur'ān as follows:

...For We will send the she-camel by way of trial for them. So watch them, O Ṣāliḥ, and possess thyself in patience. And tell them that the water is to be divided between them, each one's right to drink being brought forward by suitable turns. But they called to their companion, and he took a sword in hand, and ham-strung her.¹⁰³

...But the apostle of God said to them, 'It is a she-camel of God. And bar her not from having a drink.' Then they rejected him as a false prophet, and they ham-strung her. So their Lord, on account of their crime, obliterated their traces and made them equal in destruction, high and low.¹⁰⁴

Thus, the Qur'ān presents the she-camel as a Sign or Symbol which the prophet Ṣāliḥ used for a warning to the proud oppressors of the poor. The advent of the she-camel was made a test case to ascertain if the rich would repent and reason with the poor. As it happened, the affluent ones crippled the camel and killed it, and, consequently, they received the judgement of God. The incident of the she-camel, as recorded by the Qur'ān, is significantly at variance with the corresponding story as related by John of Damascus. John's version of this story may be derived from some obscure Muslim tradition, but it is not in keeping with the Qur'ān.

Furthermore, John proceeds to ~~pontificate~~ about the she-camel and her alleged offspring. John states:

...Your prophet, then, to whom as you say God has spoken, why did he not find out about the camel, where she is grazing and who is milking her and drinking her milk? Or did she also happen, like her mother, to fall into the hands of evil men and was killed, or has she, before you already, entered paradise and from her is going to flow the river of milk that you are talking about? For you say that you will have three rivers in paradise flowing water, wine and milk.¹⁰⁵

John taunts the Muslims, via the above comments, by suggesting that the offspring of the she-camel is creating the river of milk which will flow from paradise. In this connection, the Qur'ān states:

...Here is a parable of the Garden which the righteous are promised. In it are rivers of water incorruptible; rivers of milk of which the taste never changes; rivers of wine, a joy to those who drink; and rivers of honey pure and clear...¹⁰⁶

This Quranic text relates, in metaphorical language, the notion of four, not three as John suggests, types of river as representing the joys of paradise. John mistakenly, or sarcastically, treats metaphorical language as statement of fact and proceeds to launch an absurd attack on Muḥammad as follows:

...and your prophet is boasting in vain that he talked with God, since there was not revealed to him the mystery about the camel. If, on the other hand, she is in paradise, she again drinks the water and you are going, for lack of water, to dry up in the midst of the delights of paradise. And if you will desire to drink wine from the nearby flowing river, since there will be no water because the camel has drunk it all, drinking of it without an end you will burn inside you, and you will wobble because of drunkenness, and will be asleep. With heavy

head, therefore, and after sleep, and with intoxication because of the wine you will miss the pleasures of paradise.

How, then, did your prophet not think of all these, that they might happen to you in the paradise of delight? He never cared to find out where the camel is living now; neither did you, however, ask him about, when, out of his dreams, he was preaching to you about the three rivers. But we assure you, definitely, that your wonderful camel has already entered before you into the souls of asses, where you also are going to abide, like animals.¹⁰⁷

There is not the slightest hint of reason or objectivity in the above section of John's writings on Islam. Indeed, only a fool would equate, as John does, the metaphor of heavenly wine with the effects of earthly wine on the natural body. It is obvious, to anyone familiar with the Qur'ān, that the wine of paradise is metaphorical of the spiritual purity of bliss. In brief, John's comments on Muhammad, as presented above, are sarcastic, petty and rude.

Finally, John continues to attack Muhammad and the Qur'ān as follows:

...Muhammad, also, talks about the discourse of The Table. He says that Christ requested from God a table, and it was given to him. Because, he says, he told him 'I have given to you and to your companions an incorruptible table'. Also the discourse of The Heifer, and several other idle tales worthy of laughter, which because of their number, I think that I should skip. He made a law that they and the women be circumcised, and he commanded them neither to observe the Sabbath, nor to be baptized and, on the one hand, to eat what is forbidden in the Law and, on the other, to abstain from the other ones which the law permits; he also forbade drinking wine altogether.¹⁰⁸

The Qur'ān presents Jesus as requesting a table from heaven.¹⁰⁹ Does this request for 'a table' refer to the Lord's Supper,¹¹⁰ or to the vision of Peter,¹¹¹ or to the feeding of five thousand people?¹¹² Perhaps the Quranic

notion of the said table is best understood as being a sign from God. In any case, John misrepresents the text of the Qur'ān with regard to the table in question. Moreover, John ridicules the Quranic discourse of the Heifer¹¹³, but there is no evidence to show that John was acquainted with the actual text of the same. John then proclaims that Muḥammad advocated that men and women should be circumcised, and that Baptism and Sabbath observance be disbanded. These customs, though well known to Christians via Muslim practice, can find, with the exception of the alleged denial of Sabbath observance¹¹⁴, no direct support from the Qur'ān. Further, John's reference to Muḥammad as one who altered the Mosaic Law can find Quranic endorsement,¹¹⁵ and the Qur'ān is in unison with John's assertion that Muḥammad forbade the drinking of wine.¹¹⁶

In conclusion it may be said that the above-cited writings of John of Damascus represent the first major theological critique of Islam. Throughout the said writings Islam is never treated as a religion in its own right, but is presented only in its relation to Christianity. Also, the question of Muḥammad's prophethood is dismissed by John because of its lack of miraculous sanction, and of any prophetic testimony to the advent of Muḥammad. All in all, John's general knowledge of Islam is sketchy, and his critical analysis of Muḥammad is based upon conjecture and disinformation. Accordingly, Merrill states:

...One is struck by the absence of clear-cut, definite circumstantial detail. In particular, what about the history of long opposition to Muhammad at Mecca, the migration to Yathrib, the establishment of the Islamic community, its defence against the Meccans, its growth to political supremacy over Arabia, the acceptance by the Meccans and the Arabs in general of Islam? There is no hint that the Book as a unified whole did not come into being till after Muhammad's death, or that the text had to be standardized twice because reciters differed. The Nestorian al-Kindi, an Arab from the Banu Kinda of Central

Arabia, who wrote at Baghdad a century later, gives such information. Can John of Damascus have thought these matters unessential to his purpose? Or may it be that he was ignorant of them?¹¹⁷

Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that John of Damascus, within the limits of his subjective Christian understanding of Muhammad, was destined to portray Islam as the 'heresy of the Ishmaelites'. Nonetheless, John's critique of Muhammad, though seriously flawed, was embraced by many subsequent Christian writers on Islam. Daniel, commenting on this point, states:

...St. John also introduced other elements that would long survive: he descended to ridicule, for example, of what he mistakenly took to be Quranic belief, the 'camel of God', in a petty way; and he began the long tradition of attacking Muhammad for bringing in God - simulating revelation - in order to justify his own sexual indulgence, instancing the story of Zayd and Zaynab, which would become a classic Christian theme. He also asserted that Muhammad made up his doctrine from the Old and New Testaments on the advice of an Arian monk who instructed him. All these ideas were to be important in later Christian polemic.¹¹⁸

John of Damascus continues his theological critique of Islam in his¹¹⁹ other written work entitled, The Discussion of a Christian and a Saracen. The purpose of this work is to equip Christians to reply intelligently to questions posed by Muslims.¹²⁰ For example, a portion of the said work states:

...Christian. What do you say is the will of God? I say it is forbearance and long suffering...When God said, 'Thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not commit fornication, thou shalt not kill', did He will that we should steal, or commit fornication, or kill?

...Saracen. No; for He so willed, he did not say this.

...Christian. Glory to God that you have confessed. For see, you have agreed with me in

this, and that God does not will that we should steal, or commit fornication, or murder...¹²¹

What may be significant then is that the above paragraphs present a mildly constructive approach to relations between Christianity and Islam. Moreover, the said dialogue may have contributed to the development of Muslim theological thought.¹²² Indeed, Sahas considers the work under review to be, 'an earnest desire on both sides to reason together and to debate their theological convictions'.¹²³ Still, it is clear that the work in question shows no trace whatsoever of John of Damascus considering the originality of Islam.¹²⁴ John's response to Islam is logical at certain points, but it is presented through Christian thought-forms; and Muḥammad is not even mentioned or considered in any way. In short, the claims advanced by Muslims with regard to Muḥammad as the messenger of God receive no explicit consideration in John's Dialexis.

Théodore Abū Qurra (740 to 825)

Another Christian apologist in the face of Islam was Théodore Abū Qurra who was a Melkite bishop of Ḥarrān (Mesopotamia) and a disciple of John of Damascus. Ḥarrān was a multi-religious city incorporating Jews, Christians, Muslims and pagans. Théodore's knowledge of Islam is on the same level as that of John of Damascus. However, Théodore carried John's approach to Islam into the realm of polemics. That is to say, Théodore employs the art of dialectics in his response to Islam. The object of the lesson is to prove the truth of Christianity by logical reasoning. It seems that this approach to dialogue between Christians and Muslims was requested by the Muslims as follows:

...Prove it, not with the help of your Isaiahs or your Matthews whom I do not trust, but rather through the use of notions that are in common use, compelling and accepted by all.¹²⁵

This objective quest for the inherent worth of Christianity was necessary because of the Muslim claim that the text of the Bible had been falsified. The writings¹²⁶ of Théodore Abū Qurra with regard to Islam were all in Arabic. One relevant section of Théodore's writings is as follows:

...Théodore. For Moses and Christ did not become worthy to be received simply because they were preaching and teaching, as you have assumed, so that Muhammad also should be believed because of his preaching and teaching; but consider the record concerning each which is trustworthy. (Here follows an account of the miracles of Moses' staff and the hand in his bosom - Ex. 4: 1-8). And God said to him, 'If they will not believe the first-sign, nor the second, make the water blood'. And so after Moses had been sent, he did (thus); and his words were confirmed by his works. Is this so or not?

...Saracen. Entirely so.

...Théodore. Christ came confirming in himself his mission from God; (for) testimony was borne (to him) not only by the prophecy of Moses; but he established himself by signs, wonders and mighty works after that prophecy.

...Saracen. By what things?

...Théodore. By a birth without the aid of seed, and by a mother unjoined to a man, and by a birth from a virgin; by the change of water into wine; then after this, not obscure but very well known (are) the giving of sight to the blind, the cleansing of the lepers, the strengthening of the palsied, the healing of various diseases, the manifestation of his deity upon the mountain, the driving out of demons, the satisfaction of many thousands from a few loaves and fish, the raising of the dead as from sleep, and finally the regeneration of sinful human nature. What do you say to these things, O Saracen? Did Christ establish himself by demonstrations less than the signs of Moses?

...Saracen. In no wise.

...Théodore. This one, who was foretold by Moses, who by so many and such signs has demonstrated that he came from God, declared to his disciples, saying, 'The law and the prophets

were until John the Baptist. He who has ears to hear, let him hear'. Where then is your prophet? That is not obscure.¹²⁷

The above discussion, whilst appearing to be objective in its treatment of Islam, is, nevertheless, subjected to the Christian perspective. The above so-called dialogue presents, from the outset, the contemporary Christian understanding of the supremacy of Christianity in relation to Judaism and Islam. Indeed, Théodore, like John of Damascus, considers that Moses and Jesus, in contrast to Muḥammad, were divinely sanctioned in their respective ministries due to their preaching and teaching being accompanied by miracles. However, such a view is open to question. The said miracles can never be used as a legitimate means to elevate Moses and Jesus above Muḥammad. For example, Hunter states:

...Jesus refused to do miracles merely to show people that he was sent by God. No such legitimating proof of his authority would be given (Mark 8.12). The only sign they would get, he said, would be that of Jonah, i.e. that of a man preaching in God's name (Luke 11.29f; cf. Matt. 12.39f).¹²⁸

In the light of Hunter's remarks it would seem that preaching is the all-important factor in the rôle of a messenger of God. Consequently, Muḥammad must be judged, not by the absence of miracles from his ministry, but by the inherent content of the message conveyed by him. Thus, Théodore is mistaken when he attempts to use the miracles of Moses and Jesus as a means to degrade Muḥammad. In any case, many of the Biblical miracles as cited by Théodore are also found in the Qur'ān.¹²⁹

Next, Théodore's reference to Moses predicting the advent of Christ is perhaps an allusion to a verse from Deuteronomy in which Moses foretells the coming of another prophet similar to himself as follows:

...The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brethren - him you shall heed...¹³⁰

According to the Christian scholar Davies, the above reference to 'prophet' is, 'singular collective and means many prophets'.¹³¹ Hence, the notion of Moses announcing his prophetic successors, and the prophetic office being filled by a succession of prophets, would most certainly find a definite echo in the Quranic understanding of Moses and the subsequent continuous line of prophets.¹³² Without doubt, the above text from Deuteronomy has been taken out of context and used as a singular Christian prophecy in respect of Jesus. For instance, the author of Acts, via Peter's speech to the Jews, states:

...But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ should suffer, he thus fulfilled...Moses said, 'The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet from your brethren as he raised me up. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you. And it shall be that every soul that does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people'.¹³³

Once again we have an example of Christian interpretation of a particular verse from the Old Testament. Christian interpretation of certain Old Testament texts as prophecies in favour of Jesus goes far beyond the vision of the Old Testament authors. It is clear that the author of Acts, and Théodore Abū Qurra, are happy to use words allegedly spoken by Moses in order to enhance the status of Jesus. Nonetheless, the words in question had originally nothing to do with Jesus.

Furthermore, Théodore portrays the Christian belief in the virginal conception of Jesus as providing a unique demonstration of God's power. Does such an assertion possess any credibility? That is to say, is the notion of the Virgin Birth fact, or fiction? After analysing the relevant evidence, Casey states:

...the absence of the virgin birth from most New Testament documents, combined with the inconsistent and legendary nature of the two major sources in which it is found, shows that the virgin birth of Jesus is a secondary development rather than an historical fact.¹³⁴

If the above sentiments are correct, then it follows that Jesus was simply the first child of a normal marriage between Joseph and Mary.¹³⁵ Consequently, Théodore's use of the Virgin Birth as an implicit sign of Jesus being superior to Muhammad is without foundation. Yet, for Théodore, and Christian orthodoxy, the Virgin Birth does not stand in isolation. Cragg states:

...the virgin birth of Jesus, in Christian orthodoxy, has always been within the larger, deeper, surer faith of the Incarnation. The latter can subsist without the former. For, otherwise, the former would have no *raison d'être*, either in fact or faith. That 'the Word was made flesh' is the controlling truth of faith.¹³⁶

Leaving aside the question of the deeper Christian belief in the Incarnation, it is entirely possible that the notion of the virginal conception of Jesus is fictional. If so, it then follows that Jesus, like Muhammad, was conceived via the process of human procreation. The Qur'ān presents the virginal conception of Jesus as a holy event designed as a mercy and a blessing.¹³⁷ But the Qur'ān, in contrast to Christianity, presents the Virgin Birth as an isolated example of God's power, and as a vehicle for the advent of the prophethood of Jesus.

Théodore continues his dialogue with the Saracen by portraying the Biblical account of the Transfiguration¹³⁸ as a manifestation of Jesus' divinity, and, by implication, Jesus is therefore superior to Muhammad. Still, was the Transfiguration an historical event? Commenting on this

question, Macquarrie states:

...I think it would be fair to say that the story is more an account of the disciples' reaction to Jesus than of anything that happened in Jesus himself...I would certainly be going too far to say that it was already an understanding of Jesus as the incarnate Son or Word. But the incident may be taken as evidence of a gradual deepening in the disciples' estimate of Jesus, a deepening process which came eventually to the idea of incarnation.¹³⁹

It would seem then that the story of the Transfiguration may reflect the disciples' deepening understanding of the person of Jesus. However, Théodore's appeal to the Transfiguration as being objective proof of Jesus' divinity can find no support from New Testament scholarship. Hence, the notion of the Transfiguration cannot be used to uniquely elevate Jesus, or to demean Muḥammad.

Théodore next portrays the culmination of the ministry and mission of Jesus as the means by which sinful human nature can be regenerated. The notion of Original Sin is one which Islam emphatically denies, affirming that every human being comes into the world innocent and sinless. Moreover, according to the Qur'ān,¹⁴⁰ each human individual is responsible for his or her own actions. It would appear that Théodore's reference to Jesus initiating the regeneration of sinful human nature can find no echo in Muslim experience.

Finally, in the present section of the work under review, Théodore points out that, according to the New Testament¹⁴¹, the age of the prophets ended with John the Baptist. Indeed the New Testament conveys a definite sense of finality in Jesus' teaching which would exclude any notion of Muḥammad as the final prophet. How, then, can the Qur'ān portray Muḥammad as 'the Seal of the Prophets'?¹⁴² The question of the finality of Muḥammad's prophethood will be analysed in detail in the last chapter of this thesis.

To sum up for the moment it may be said that Théodore's critique of Islam, as presented above, is biased towards the Christian viewpoint. Théodore treats Islam as a system of belief which is fundamentally flawed in all respects. Not for one moment does he consider the originality of Islam. Also, the question of the legitimacy of Muḥammad's prophethood is dismissed by Théodore. In a bid to discredit Muḥammad, Théodore rehearses what he considers as key points in the New Testament portrayal of Jesus. However, these said points by no means provide conclusive proof of the supremacy of Jesus. On the contrary, some of the very points in question show Jesus and Muḥammad as being, in many ways, equal in status. Another relevant section of Théodore's writings on Islam is as follows:

...The Agarenes...bend their efforts to one point, the denying of the divinity of the Word of God...For their false prophet, since he followed the error of Arius, passed on to them this teaching, so opposed to piety and religion.¹⁴³

This statement is identical with the sentiments previously expressed by Théodore's teacher, namely, John of Damascus. In the first chapter of this thesis it was suggested that Muḥammad may well have had esoteric conversations with an Armenian monk who was exiled for unorthodox opinions, probably Nestorian or Arian. Nonetheless, such an encounter does not necessarily mean that Muḥammad embraced Arian Christology merely as an historical accident. The above assertion that Muḥammad, because he erred in his Christological assessment of Jesus, was a false prophet is made without any objective study of Islam. Théodore goes on to assert that 'Jesus, the giver of the new covenant, is co-equal with God.'¹⁴⁴ Naturally, this assertion is denied by Mohammed ibn 'Abd Allah al-Hāshimī, who quotes the following Quranic verse:

...Christ Jesus the son of Mary was no more than an apostle of God, and His Word, which We bestowed on Mary, and a Spirit proceeding from Him...¹⁴⁵

Consequently, the terms Word and Spirit of God become the focal points for discussion. All in all, the said terms in respect of Christ are common to both Christianity and Islam. Problems arise, however, when Théodore attempts to introduce the Christian notion of the divinity of Christ by equating the Word of God with the Son of God. In other words, Théodore assumes that the common vocabulary between Christians and Muslims with regard to the terms in question will provide a means by which to Christianise Muslims and the Qur'ān. He was mistaken. O'Shaughnessy, commenting on Théodore's approach to Islam, states:

...It illustrates the difficulty the theologians of that age found in handling a question proposed in terminology apparently identical but in reality wholly foreign in meaning to their own.¹⁴⁶

Indeed, according to the Qur'ān¹⁴⁷, Jesus was a human being who was created in a special and unique manner by God. In Islam, however, the notion of the divinity of Jesus is completely contrary to the message which Jesus brought of the oneness and uniqueness of God. It comes as no surprise that the disputing parties, as portrayed via Théodore's writings as presented above, did not arrive at any definite conclusion. Hence, in this regard, Guillaume states:

...both Christianity and Islam are, so far as apologetics are concerned, where Abū Qurra and his friends left them, fruitful sources of misunderstanding the one to the other.¹⁴⁸

The Catholicos Timothy I (728 to 823)

Another important Christian response to Islam and Muḥammad is found in the writings of Catholicos Timothy I. Timothy was a successful leader of the Nestorian Church of which he was

Patriarch from 780 to 823. Timothy was fluent in Greek, Syriac and Arabic, and proved to be a scholar in philosophy and theology. He moved his see from Ctesiphon to Baghdad and there, as representative of his Church, he was able to engage in theological debate with the caliph. Timothy's Apology for Christianity is the account of his meeting with caliph al-Mahdī (C. 781). Timothy's approach to the caliph on the question of the legitimacy of Muhammad's prophethood is as follows:

...Our God-loving King...embarked on another theme and said to me: 'How is it that you accept Christ and the Gospel from the testimony of the Torah and of the prophets, and you do not accept Muhammad from the testimony of Christ and the Gospel?' And I replied to his Majesty: 'O our king, we have received concerning Christ numerous and distinct testimonies from the Torah and the prophets...So far as Muhammad is concerned I have not received a single testimony either from Jesus Christ or from the Gospel'...And the King asked me: 'Who is then the Paraclete?' - And I answered: 'The Spirit of God'. - And the King asked: 'What is the Spirit of God?' And I replied: 'God, by nature; and one who proceeds, by attribute; as Jesus Christ taught about Him'. - And our glorious King said: 'And what did Jesus Christ teach about Him?' - And I answered: 'He spoke to His disciples as follows: "When I go away to Heaven, I will send unto you the Spirit - Paraclete who proceedeth from the Father, whom the world cannot receive, who dwelleth with you and is among you, who searcheth all things, even the deep things of God, who will bring to your remembrance all the truth that I have said unto you..."'

...And our King said to me: 'All these refer to Muhammad'. And I replied to him: 'If Muhammad were the Paraclete, since the Paraclete is the Spirit of God, Muhammad, would, therefore, be the Spirit of God; and the Spirit of God being uncircumscribed like God, Muhammad would also be uncircumscribed like God; and he who is uncircumscribed being invisible, Muhammad would also be invisible and without a human body; and he who is without a body being uncomposed, Muhammad would also be uncomposed. It follows from all this that Muhammad is not the Paraclete...

...And the God-loving King said to me: 'As the Jews behaved towards Jesus whom they did not accept, so the Christians behaved towards Muḥammad whom they did not accept' - And I replied to his Majesty: 'The Jews did not accept Jesus in spite of the fact that the Torah and the prophets were full of testimonies about Him, and this renders them worthy of condemnation. As to us we have not accepted Muḥammad because we have not a single testimony about him in our Books'. - And our King said: 'There were many testimonies but the Books have been corrupted, and you have removed them'. - And I replied to him thus: 'Where is it known, O King, that the Books have been corrupted by us, and where is that uncorrupted Book from which you have learned that the Books which we use have been corrupted?'

...And our King said to me: 'Do you not believe that our Book was given by God?' - And I replied to him: 'I will say something of which your Majesty is well aware, and that is all the words of God found in the Torah and in the Prophets, and those of them found in the Gospel and in the writings of the Apostles, have been confirmed by signs and miracles; as to the words of your Book they have not been corroborated by a single sign or miracle...'

...And our gracious and wise King said to me: 'What do you say about Muḥammad?' And I replied to his Majesty: 'Muḥammad is worthy of all praise, by all reasonable people, O my Sovereign. He walked in the path of the prophets, and trod in the track of the lovers of God. All the prophets taught the doctrine of one God, and since Muḥammad taught the doctrine of the unity of God, he walked, therefore, in the path of the prophets. Further, all the prophets drove men away from bad works, and brought them nearer to good works, and since Muḥammad drove his people away from bad works and brought them nearer to the good ones, he walked, therefore, in the path of the prophets.'

Again, all the prophets separated men from idolatry and polytheism, and attached them to God and to His cult, and since Muḥammad separated his people from idolatry and polytheism, and attached them to the cult and the knowledge of one God, beside whom there is no other God, it is obvious that he walked in the path of the prophets. Finally Muḥammad taught about God, His Word and His Spirit, and since all the prophets had prophesied about God, His Word and His Spirit,

Muhammad walked, therefore, in the path of all the prophets.¹⁴⁹

The dialogue between Timothy and al-Mahdī is sincere and cordial. Timothy, in keeping with earlier Christian apologists, attaches great significance to the belief that many Old Testament prophecies were fulfilled by the coming of Christ. Consequently, the implication is that Muḥammad, as one inferior to Jesus, received no such prophecies in relation to his ministry. Yet, the Old Testament does not provide absolute objective proof of the divine legitimacy of Jesus' ministry, and the prophecies in question remain open to interpretation. Further, it is clear from Timothy's writings, as presented above, that Muslims have become more sophisticated in their response to Christian arguments against Islam. For example, al-Mahdī is familiar with the Muslim claim that the 'Paraclete' of the Fourth Gospel can be used as a prophecy in respect of Muḥammad. Also, al-Mahdī presents the Muslim contention that there were many prophecies relating to Muḥammad in the scriptures, but the books have been corrupted. The said Muslim notions shall be discussed at length in the next chapter of this thesis.

Next, the caliph asks Timothy whether he believes that the Qur'ān is from God. Timothy declines to give a positive answer, but he does stress that the former scriptures, unlike the Qur'ān, were all confirmed by miracles. Sweetman, commenting on this point, states:

...This is a very interesting statement indeed, for apparently Timothy has no knowledge of any miracles performed by Muḥammad, and the caliph does not enlighten him on the subject. If the caliph knew of any miracles reported of Muḥammad would he have let this pass?¹⁵⁰

What may be significant then is that during the eighth century Muslims began to compose Muḥammad's Biography (Sīrah)¹⁵¹ and all its many references to miracles and

wonders. Were these created in order to counteract Christian apologists? In any case, Timothy's appeal to miracles as providing the hallmark of truth is a simplistic argument which may be used by both Christians and Muslims. Accordingly, Sweetman states:

...Generally speaking, too much stress is placed on miracles as proof of the truth of religion and the mission of the prophets...How might the Muslim retort now as he well could do that since the conquests of the armies of Islam had laid low a mighty empire, God's blessing was upon Islam, and the truth of Islam was proved. Even the Nestorian Patriarch anticipates this.¹⁵²

The question of Christian recognition of Muhammad's prophethood, as posed by al-Mahdī, is carefully handled by Timothy. Timothy, whilst not recognising Muḥammad's prophethood, commends Muḥammad for having 'walked in the path of the prophets'. Further, Timothy portrays all believers as praising the good points of Muḥammad's ministry. Indeed, Sweetman considers that, 'Timothy's apology is remarkable for many concessions which he makes'.¹⁵³ It would seem then that Timothy's response to Muḥammad is a radical departure from the earlier Christian responses to Muḥammad. Yet, is the said conciliatory Christian response to Muḥammad objective and genuine? That is to say, is there an ulterior motive behind Timothy's thinking? The sentiments in question may well have been prompted by the spirit of political compromise. For instance, in Timothy's day the sentence of death was the penalty for ridiculing Muḥammad.¹⁵⁴ Nonetheless, the writings of Timothy, as cited above, were available in both Syriac and Arabic. Therefore, this demonstrates that Christians used the dialogue between Timothy and al-Mahdī as a means of guidance in debating with Muslims. Commenting on the significance of Timothy's writings, Gaudeul states:

...Each age modified it, shortened it or lengthened it according to its needs. Variants

were introduced when experience had shown that an argument had more impact in another form. Nevertheless, the contents remain substantially unchanged...and from the time of Timothy, dialogue freezes. Arguments soon become repetitive. Timothy's achievement was to present us with the form that dialogue was going to keep for centuries.¹⁵⁵

The Correspondence of Al-Hāshimī/Al-Kindī (c. 820)

Another very important piece of Christian apologetic writing is found in the work known as, The Correspondence of Al-Hāshimī/Al-Kindī. This so-called correspondence is in the form of two, true or fictitious, letters written one by a Muslim, the other by a Christian. Such a method was employed to present both sides of the Christian-Muslim dialogue. However, the most detailed letter was usually indicative of the accepted belief of the author. Thus, the author of the above work is most likely a Christian with the pen-name, al-Kindī, but whose real name is unknown. Al-Kindī portrays Muḥammad as follows:

...an adventurer, a raider, a man of loose morality...how could He be a prophet?¹⁵⁶

...Would you want us - God save you - to give up God's word and the Mystery which Moses, His interlocutor, entrusted to us, and which Moses confirmed by wonderful signs and evident miracles...so that we should receive the work of your companion Muḥammad who comes with no proof, no miracle, no wonder, no clear sign, no definite proof.¹⁵⁷

...Here are the facts: there was a Christian monk called Sergius who put forward heretical ideas which his companions rejected: they excommunicated him expelled him and forbade him to enter church. He then repented of his action and decided to do something that would be an expiation of his sin and would rehabilitate him in the eyes of his fellow-Christians. So he went off to the country of Tihāma and wandered about until he reached the territory of Mecca.

...As soon as he had made friends with your

companion Muḥammad, he beguiled him to win him over...Ceaselessly this monk retired with Muḥammad for many long sessions and talks, teaching him one thing after another first turning him away from idol - worship, then training him as a propagandist and a disciple of his spreading the doctrines of Nestorius.¹⁵⁸

Al-Kindī's response to Muḥammad, as presented above, is harsh and biased to the Christian viewpoint. As previously stated, anyone guilty of criticising Muḥammad, during the period under review, was most definitely a candidate for the death penalty. Thus, the anonymity of the author in question enables him to speak his mind, from the Christian perspective, with regard to Muḥammad. Consequently, the notion of Muḥammad's prophethood is weighed in the Christian balance and found to be wanting. Yet, al-Kindī's critique of Muḥammad is less than convincing. That is to say, the accusation that Muḥammad was morally depraved is, as shown earlier, unfair and made without objective appreciation of the relevant circumstances. Further, to contrast, as al-Kindī does, the miracles performed by Moses with Muḥammad's inability to perform the same cannot be used as evidence against the notion of Muḥammad's prophethood. As previously stated, the Old Testament miracles in question are open to interpretation, and in themselves prove very little. Also, al-Kindī lays great significance on the rôle of Muḥammad's alleged Nestorian mentor, Sergius. Indeed, there is some evidence to suggest that Muḥammad may have encountered an heretical Christian monk. But such an encounter cannot be used as a weapon against Muḥammad. Muslims do not deny that Muḥammad had contact with certain Christian influences, but no link of dependence is accepted. In short, according to Muslims, revelation came to Muḥammad directly, not through previous scriptures, or religions, but parallel to them.¹⁵⁹

Al-Kindī based his response to Muḥammad upon subjective Christian reasoning which fades in the light of objective Christian and Muslim scholarship. Yet, al-Kindī's writings

had, and perhaps continue to have, a significant impact on the Christian understanding of Muḥammad. Gaudeul, commenting on this point, states:

...For a long time, Christians have known Islam through the description given by al-Kindī. This is true particularly by the way in which Muḥammad is presented. In the 12th century in Spain this work was translated into latin, under the direction of Peter the Venerable, abbot of Cluny. In this way, the West has been strongly influenced by al-Kindī's outlook. In 1543 this latin version was published again by Bibliander in Switzerland, and used with other documents to provide Reformed Theologians with a refutation of Islam. Finally, the Arabic text, re-printed in London (1885), was published again in 1912 by Nile Mission Press, in Cairo, probably for contemporary use.¹⁶⁰

The Voluntary Martyrs of Ninth-Century Córdoba

The next relevant Christian response to Muḥammad is found in the voluntary martyrs' movement of ninth-century Córdoba, in Spain. It seems that Islamic Spain, during the period in question, comprised significant groups of Jews and Christians.¹⁶¹ Accordingly, did many of the adherents of these groups convert to Islam? All in all, it is perhaps correct to suggest that conversions to Islam gradually increased.¹⁶² It seems that few Muslims, aware of the death penalty for apostasy, were tempted to forsake Islam in favour of Christianity. The subject peoples of Spain were granted, by the Muslims, the status of dhimmī (protected person) which allowed them to practise their particular religious traditions. Christians, however, were obliged to adhere to certain restrictions. For example, Christians were not permitted to make religious processions or to use bells.¹⁶³ Moreover, at one stage Muslims ruled that all people, including Christians, must be circumcised.¹⁶⁴ It appears that many church leaders, during the period under review, were content to tolerate Islam and, thereby, the Church lapsed into passivity. For instance, a letter written

by a bishop in the early tenth-century to European Christians reflects the said attitude of the Church as follows:

...We are fallen into these things because of sin, that we are in the power of the pagans (i.e. the Muslims). We are forbidden by the Apostle's word to resist power. Only one bit of comfort remains, that in the evil of such calamity they do not forbid us to follow our own religion...For the time being, therefore, we should keep this counsel, that since nothing of our religion needs to be given up, we should obey them in all the other things, and observe their commands, so far as these do not conflict with faith.¹⁶⁵

The state of affairs described in the above letter gave rise to a situation, from the ninth-century, where some people nominally embraced two religions, Christianity and Islam. In addition to these groups were those Spanish Christians who had resisted conversion to Islam but, nevertheless, had been culturally absorbed into Islamic culture. Further, there were small groups of moderate and radical Christians. The former were quite content to conform to Muslim rule, whereas the latter wanted to use almost any method to ensure the downfall of Spanish Islam. Hence, this was the socio-religious situation existing in Spain during the early part of the ninth century. It was in this situation that the Christian martyrs' movement of Córdoba (850 to 859) was born and developed.

Early in 850 Christian clergy, whilst conducting a funeral service, were stoned by Muslims. The clergy, following the example of Jesus, did not retaliate, and the Muslim mob went on the rampage through the streets of Córdoba searching for any Christians they could find. As it happened, the Muslims encountered a priest named Perfectus, and demanded to know why he did not embrace Islam. During the period in question, anyone guilty of blasphemy against Muhammad was sentenced to death. Accordingly, Perfectus was hesitant to say anything about Muhammad. Eventually, Perfectus agreed to forward his

assessment of Muḥammad on the condition that the Muslims would agree to grant him immunity from prosecution. They accepted his terms. According to Cutler, 'Perfectus denounced Muḥammad as a man of profligate life'.¹⁶⁶ Naturally, the Muslims were annoyed, but left Perfectus in peace. In time, however, some of the said Muslims relented on their promise not to divulge Perfectus' opinion of Muḥammad. Ultimately, Perfectus was judged guilty of blasphemy of Muḥammad, and was beheaded on 18th April, 850.

In 851 the Muslims charged a Christian named John of pronouncing the name of Muḥammad in a disrespectful manner. John was so provoked at the Muslims that he asserted, 'Cursed be he who wants to utter the name of your prophet at all'.¹⁶⁷ The Muslims, of course, were furious at John's reply, and punished him with four hundred stripes. When the Christians at Córdoba learned of John's punishment they reacted in a peculiar and non-violent way. That is to say, many Christians under the leadership of Eulogius and Alvarus responded to Muslim oppression by seeking martyrdom at the hands of the Muslims. Isaac was the first voluntary martyr of the movement under review. Isaac, before his execution (3rd June, 851), referred to Muḥammad as follows:

...A false prophet, liar, seducer, worker of iniquity, and perverter of innumerable souls. How is it that you do not renounce his (Muḥammad's) pestilent and perverse doctrines and embrace the perfect salvation of the Christian religion?¹⁶⁸

Gradually, forty-eight other Christians denounced Muḥammad in favour of Christ, and suffered voluntary martyrdom at the hands of the Muslims. In 854, Albar, a Christian writer, described Muḥammad as 'Antichrist'.¹⁶⁹ In this connection Kerr states:

...some of the Latin theologians of 9th century Spain, living under Muslim rule in Cordoba,

sought martyrdom by publicly identifying Muḥammad as the Antichrist. Once again it was John of Damascus who introduced the view of Islam, and by implication Muḥammad being the 'forerunner of the Antichrist', but he had not intended the term in an apocalyptic sense. In the Greek tradition it was a polemical description of any prominent political or religious figure - Emperor or Patriarch - who was believed to lead others astray from the Orthodox faith. For the Cordoban martyrs, however, the term was redolent of Daniel's vision of the fourth king who shall rise to inaugurate the millennial events proceeding the second coming of Christ.¹⁷⁰

The Córdoba martyrs' interpretation of Daniel 7 is in keeping with the spirit of conservative Christian scholarship. Some conservative commentators interpret the image, the four beasts, and the seventy weeks, as portrayed in Daniel 7, as culminating in the Incarnation of Christ.¹⁷¹ Other conservative scholars see in the chapter under review a clear reference to the second advent of Christ,¹⁷² and the horn that was to arise out of the final kingdom and dominate the three rulers (Daniel 7:24) constitutes the Antichrist, who would persecute the saints of God (Daniel 7:25)¹⁷³. However, is the passage in question limited to the above-cited conservative Christian interpretations? By no means. For example, Young states:

...The Book of Daniel speaks of the sufferings of persecuted Jews in the author's own time; but his words can be taken (as by Israelis) as prophecy of the sufferings of Jews under Hitler; or they can be taken (as traditionally by Christians) as prophecy of the sufferings of Jesus. But surely there is no need to limit the application to any one of these occasions or fulfilments.¹⁷⁴

It is clear that the application of the Book of Daniel need not be limited to any particular occasion. However, the Córdoba martyrs used the Book of Daniel to bolster up their negative pre-conceived ideas about Muḥammad; and these ideas were motivated both by their understanding of previous



Christian responses to Muḥammad, and by psychological pressure created via the limitations of Muslim rule. Eulogius, one of the leaders of the martyrs' movement, was finally arrested by the Muslims. Cutler, commenting on Eulogius' trial, states:

...he himself began to preach Christianity and to denounce Muḥammad to his Muslim judges, for unfortunately, preaching Christianity and denouncing Muḥammad were considered two sides of the same coin in his own mind and that of the other martyrs.¹⁷⁵

Eulogius was executed by the Muslims in 859. In response to the martyrs' movement the Muslims threatened to murder all the Christians of Córdoba if the martyrdoms did not cease. Thus, the Christians ceased to embrace the concept of martyrdom in order to preserve the purely spiritual nature of their objective. The martyrs were of the opinion that their voluntary martyrdoms would be used of God to defeat Islam. But if their voluntary martyrdoms were to provoke a general massacre of Christians, then such a situation would fail to merit God's approval.¹⁷⁶ Hence, it may be said that the Church of Spain, via its policy of passivity, inadvertently gave birth to the martyrs' movement. What, then, is the significance of the voluntary martyrs of ninth-century Córdoba? Gaudeul, commenting on this question, states:

...Their influence carried with it a very negative view of Islam and Muḥammad, and a call to give a public testimony of faith. This testimony was always seen as combining a positive proclamation of Christ and a cursing of Islam and Muḥammad.¹⁷⁷

In the long-term, the example of the Córdoba martyrs, in combination with other factors, may have provided the impetus for the crusades. Waltz comments:

...The culmination of this historical and ideological development was holy war...thus

legitimizing intolerance and glorifying martyrdom...Thus the acts and writings of those few Córdoba Christians, and the ideas and attitudes those acts and writings expressed, came to form an important strand of ideology which, when combined with the papally developed ideology of the *res publica christiana*, provided the motivation for the crusades...¹⁷⁸

It is reasonably clear that the negative and critical attitude espoused by the Córdoba martyrs in their response to Muḥammad had far reaching implications for subsequent generations of Christians and Muslims. The Córdoba martyrs established a mode of responding to Muḥammad which, though fundamentally flawed, was to shape, to a large extent, the course of Christian-Muslim relations for centuries.

Nicetas of Byzantium (c. 842 to 912)

The next written Christian theological response to Muḥammad comes from the pen of Nicetas of Byzantium. It seems that Nicetas resided at the court of Constantinople and was, in all probability, a teacher of philosophy. Nicetas formulates his Christian response to Muḥammad and Islam in reply to letters sent by an unknown Muslim to Constantinople. Accordingly, Nicetas assesses Muḥammad as follows:

...This camel-driver did not realize that it is not enough to preach God in order to be a herald of the truth... and I would tell this Barbarian, this enemy of God: your prophecy has been written in contradiction with those of (the Prophets).¹⁷⁹

...He was by nature perverse and talkative, or rather stupid and bestial, a coward too, quick to anger, distrustful and arrogant. Really, I don't know what he lacked in all the many kinds of perversity that Satan possesses! As to right judgement and clear thought, his speech is entirely lacking of them.¹⁸⁰

...Seeing all the things that Muḥammad's god is swearing by, it is easy to see what is the nature of his god, or rather, by this means, of his many

gods...For it is by fraud that he puts forward the name of the only God: in fact, underhand, he leads the Arabs towards idolatry and hellenism...181

Nicetas's style of argument is, in keeping with the custom of polemicists of his time, both Christian and Muslim, severely abusive. According to Nicetas, Muḥammad is a false prophet devoid of any worth and inspired by Satan. Such a Christian assessment of Muḥammad is motivated by hatred which leads to a major distortion of the facts in question. As shown in the first chapter of this thesis, there is much to praise in the life and ministry of Muḥammad. Further, Nicetas is of the opinion that the notion of Islamic monotheism was only a means by which Muḥammad could restore polytheism and even the cult of Satan. Once again, Nicetas's response to Muḥammad is absurd. For instance, Muḥammad, from the outset of his ministry, embraced the notion of a radical monotheism. Any suggestion that polytheism is the ultimate goal of Islam is, to say the least, absurd.¹⁸² But, all of this having been said, what influence did Nicetas's response to Muḥammad have on Christian-Muslim relations? In this regard, Khoury states:

...In spite of its excesses, perhaps because of its excesses, Nicetas's work established itself in Byzantium, during centuries, as the classic in matters of Christian controversy against Islam.¹⁸³

Time after time, generations of Christians after Nicetas have repeated the claim that Islam represents the embodiment of Satan in opposition to Christ. Thus, the writings of Nicetas of Byzantium have played no small part in creating hostility and absurd misunderstanding between Christians and Muslims.

George Hamartolos (9th century)

Next in order of time is the Byzantine monk, George Hamartolos. He wrote a Chronicon Syntomon which portrays the history of mankind from the Creation down to the year 842. In chapter 235 of this work, George refers to Muḥammad and the Muslims as follows:

...These foggy-minded and stupid men refuse openly to examine the truest faith, sacred and guaranteed by God, while these hardened wretches accept the forgery to which this swindler gave the appearance of a true religion...What madness! What grotesque folly on the part of this miserable trickster...¹⁸⁴

George Hamartolos, via the above abusive comments, shows himself as one with no objective knowledge of Islam. In short, he is content to rehearse, in ignorant hatred, the half-baked opinions of his Christian predecessors with regard to Muḥammad and the Muslims.

In addition to the work under review, George portrays Muḥammad as an epileptic, and suggests that Muḥammad's claim to prophethood was simply a means to explain his illness.¹⁸⁵ Temkin (1971) attributes to the Byzantine historian Theophanes (8th century) the first suggestion that Muḥammad was a victim of epilepsy. According to Temkin, Theophanes states:

...Muḥammad's wife was very grieved that she, being of noble descent, was tied to such a man who was not only poor but epileptic as well.¹⁸⁶

Is there any evidence to suggest that Muḥammad had epilepsy? According to the Qur'ān, the revelations received by Muḥammad were accompanied by intense emotional stress, physical limpness, perspiration and a state of trance. Such signs of stress motivated successive Christian leaders, from the period under review until the nineteenth century, to belittle Muḥammad by claiming that he was an epileptic. The

notion of Muḥammad's epilepsy was a convenient weapon to use in the theological war against Islam. Freemon, commenting on this point, states:

...The epileptic of the Middle Ages was considered an incurable wretch, suffering unpredictable falling spells with incontinence, an unclean person who might be possessed by the Devil.¹⁸⁷

In time, however, views of epilepsy changed, and modern Christian responses to Muḥammad dismiss the diagnosis of epilepsy. For example, Watt states:

...Epilepsy leads to physical and mental degeneration, and there are no signs of that in Muḥammad...These physical accompaniments of religious experiences are of interest to the religious psychologist, but they never either prove or disprove the truth of the content of the experiences. This is a matter for theology...¹⁸⁸

Thus, it would appear that George Hamartolos, and his successors, were devoid of reason in their contemptible and self-righteous portrayal of Muḥammad as an epileptic.

The Correspondence between 'Umar and Leo (C. 900)

The next Christian critique of Islam and Muḥammad comes from the correspondence between 'Umar and Leo. The said designations are simply pen-names. 'Umar represents the Muslim viewpoint, and Leo espouses the Christian perspective. The identity of the authors in question is unknown. For the purpose of this thesis we are concerned only with Leo's response to Muḥammad. Leo, writing to 'Umar, states:

...But you, do you feel no shame to have venerated that House that is called the Ka'ba...In order not to appear to wrongfully give you offence, I shall prove its diabolical nature, by passages from the Holy Gospel and from your

own history. Jesus Christ often drove out demons into that very desert. These unclean spirits appear to you there sometimes under serpent form, and sometimes they seem to indulge in evil relations with women, according to their custom, giving the appearance of making marriages. You, deceived by the illusion, and imprudently falling into the net, make yourselves their compeers here below and in the world to come...

...Nor can I forget the chastity of your Prophet and the manner full of artifice whereby he succeeded in seducing the woman Zeda. Of all these abominations the worst is that of accusing God of being the originator of all these filthy acts, which fact has doubtless been the cause of the introduction among your compatriots of this disgusting law. Is there indeed a worse blasphemy than that of alleging that God is the cause of all this evil.¹⁸⁹

From the above text it is clear that Leo, following the lead of Nicetas of Byzantium, portrays Islam as the product of Satan. The notion of the desert as the abode of demons can find support from the Bible¹⁹⁰, as suggested by Leo. Nonetheless, Leo's identification of the Ka'bah with these demons in serpent form is curious. Moreover, Leo's reference to the said demons as occasionally having evil relations with women, and identifying the Muslims as associates of the same, is probably a reference to the jinn. According to Muslims, the jinn are considered to be spiritual beings, both male and female, who occupy a kind of intermediate place between angels and men. Leo's response to Islam, with regard to the points in question, is based upon negative abstract reasoning which has no place in objective Christian theology.

Leo goes on to criticise Muḥammad severely for introducing 'the abominable authorization'.¹⁹¹ It would seem that this is a reference¹⁹² to the following Quranic verse:

...Your wives are as a tilth unto you. So approach your tilth when or how ye will; but do some good act for your souls beforehand. And fear God, and know that ye are to meet Him in the Hereafter.¹⁹³

But, according to A. Yūsuf 'Alī, this verse is a reminder to Muslims that:

...Sex is not a thing to be ashamed of, or to be treated lightly, or to be indulged to excess. It is as solemn a fact as any in life. It is compared to a husbandman's tilth; it is a serious affair to him; he sows the seed in order to reap the harvest...Coming from the simile to human beings, every kind of mutual consideration is required, but above all, we must remember that even in these matters there is a spiritual aspect. We must never forget our souls, and that we are responsible to Allah.¹⁹⁴

This interpretation of the Quranic verse in question is, contrary to Leo's understanding of the same, morally acceptable. Moreover, Leo's understanding of Muḥammad's marriage to Zeda¹⁹⁵ is unfortunate. As shown earlier, the said marriage, when assessed in its total context, cannot be used as effective Christian ammunition against the moral character of Muḥammad. Further, the Muslim claim that God has sanctioned every tenet of Islam, is seen by Leo as the ultimate blasphemy. Still, Leo's critique of Islam is based upon conjecture and pre-conceived Christian notions about Muḥammad. In short, Leo is convinced that Muḥammad and the Muslims are utterly mistaken in their theological beliefs. All in all, Leo's correspondence with 'Umar was not widely circulated, nor did it have any real significance in Christian-Muslim relations. It is, however, an example of what dialogue meant in the year 900.

To sum up it is clear that a few of the above-cited Christian responses to Muḥammad are positive. These responses, however, were prompted by ulterior motives which in turn created only superficial positive Christian responses to Muḥammad. Many of the Christian responses to Muḥammad, as reviewed above, are negative and hostile. It is equally clear that the said responses are based, not on any detailed knowledge of the Qur'ān, but on negative pre-conceived ideas about Islam which were destined to produce a distorted view

of Muḥammad's person and mission. That is to say, during the period in question, Christians assumed that Christianity represented the ultimate religion; and, accordingly, Islam was treated as a Christian heresy and Muḥammad was castigated as a false prophet. Nonetheless, the above-cited Christian critiques of Muḥammad fail to establish any objective criterion by which to degrade Muḥammad. Christian writers failed to bring forward any impartial evidence to show that Christianity is superior to Islam, or that Jesus is unrivalled by Muḥammad. Unfortunately, subsequent generations of Christians were influenced by the distorted portrayal of Islam and Muḥammad as presented via the above-cited Christian writings from 661 A.D. to the tenth-century.

Section 2.2: Christian Responses to Muhammad: Eleventh to Fourteenth Centuries

From the tenth century the Church in Western Europe experienced a great revival of religious interest. In 910 a monastery was established at Cluny in France in a bid to reform the Benedictine way of life. By the eleventh century the said monastery had more than two hundred associate monasteries. Moreover, from the tenth century, Western Christian pilgrimages increased in frequency and size, and many of the above-mentioned monasteries provided hospitality for pilgrims. By the eleventh century the Islamic empire was beginning to disintegrate. That is to say, between 1060 and 1090 the Normans of Southern Italy had captured Sicily from the Muslims. Further, under the leadership of Ferdinand I of Castile (1028 to 1065) the successful Christian reconquest of Spain from Muslim control had begun. Accordingly, it was considered that Christianity could triumph over Islam. From the mid-eleventh century the Abbot of Cluny, with the support of Pope Gregory VII, sent missionaries and letters to Muslim leaders in North Africa and Spain. Gaudeul, commenting on the significance of these letters within the wider context of Christian-Muslim relations, states:

...These attempts at converting Muslims, and rulers in particular, were not entirely independent from the military expeditions and political moves of Christendom against Islamic rule in the East or in the West. They were rather part of a pendular movement of Christian zeal expressing itself in turn through the sword and the word.¹⁹⁶

A Turkish emir was in control of Jerusalem in 1076, and he was vehemently opposed to Christian pilgrims coming to Jerusalem. In 1095 Pope Urban II, at the Council of Clermont in France, called for military help in order to support the Eastern Christians against the Turks. Consequently, the

first Crusade¹⁹⁷ was undertaken to assert and guarantee the right of Christian pilgrims to journey to Jerusalem, which had been denied by the Turkish conquerors. The first Crusade liberated, from Muslim control, Nicaea in 1097, Antioch in 1098, and Jerusalem in 1099. How did the Christian soldiers view their Muslim counterparts? In this regard, Neill states:

...to the majority of the Christian warriors Muslims were simply unbelievers, who had no right to existence, with whom no faith need be kept, and who might be slaughtered without ruth or pity to the glory of the Christian God. It is true, of course, that hate breeds hate, bitterness bitterness. The Saracens were just as happy, and in their own judgement equally well justified, when they had the opportunity of slaughtering Christian unbelievers.¹⁹⁸

St. Bernard of Clairvaux preached a second Crusade, and Louis VII of France and Conrad III of Germany were almost forced by him to place themselves at its head (1147). Thus, a huge Christian army crossed the Bosphorus, but the Christians were severely damaged by the Muslims. The death-blow of the Christian kingdoms came from the Egyptian Muslims who eventually recaptured Jerusalem in 1187. The third Crusade was launched in 1189. Its leaders were Barbarossa, emperor of Germany, Philip of France, and Richard of England. In 1191, after a siege of twenty-three months and in the face of determined Muslim opposition, the Christians captured Acre and a strip of the Palestinian coast. The fourth Crusade never reached the Holy Land at all. The members of this Crusade were diverted by the policy of Venice to attack the failing Byzantine empire, where they founded the Latin empire under Baldwin in 1204.

The leader of the fifth Crusade (1228 to 1229), the Emperor Frederick II, recaptured, via a truce with the sultan of Egypt, possession of Jerusalem, and also a substantial part of the Holy Land. But, Jerusalem was again wrested (1244)

from the Christians by the Kharesmians, and the sixth Crusade was undertaken (1248 to 1254) by St. Louis IX of France. However, turning aside to lay siege to Damietta in Egypt, he was surrounded by the Muslims, and, together with a large portion of his army, was taken prisoner. After purchasing his freedom he went on to Palestine, but the expedition was a complete failure. Hence, in 1270, St Louis IX organised the seventh Crusade; but again he turned aside, this time to conquer Tunis for his ambitious brother, Charles of Anjon, and died of disease under its walls. This Crusade was the last¹⁹⁹ effort and the Holy Land was left in the hands of the Muslims, although Acre, Antioch and Tripoli remained until 1291 in possession of the Templars.

All in all, the Crusades represent a great tragedy in the history of Christianity. Runciman, commenting on this point, states:

...Seen in the perspective of history the whole Crusading Movement was a vast fiasco...The triumphs of the Crusades were the triumphs of faith. But faith without wisdom is a dangerous thing...There was so much courage and so little honour, so much devotion and so little understanding. High ideals were besmirched by cruelty and greed, enterprise and endurance by a blind and narrow self-righteousness; and the Holy War itself was nothing more than a long act of intolerance in the name of God, which is the sin against the Holy Ghost.²⁰⁰

During the period under review various Christian writers responded to the question of Muḥammad in Christian theological perspective, and these written responses shall be examined critically in the following paragraphs.

Correspondence Between A 'Monk of France' and 'Al-Bāqī' (1078)

As previously stated, letters were despatched by the Abbot of Cluny to Muslim rulers during the period 1070 to 1080. For

example,²⁰¹ the letter known as the Correspondence Between A 'Monk of France' and 'Al-Bāḡī', states:

...We have sent you some of our brethren, who will bring to you a divine Word, as God helps them unto. They will explain in your presence the truth of the religion of the Christians and confirm in you the knowledge of Christ, our Lord, than whom we need faith in no other and in whom alone we look for salvation. He is God, who has veiled himself in our human form to deliver us by his innocent blood from the destruction of the Devil.

... So he deceived the children of Ishmael in regard to the Prophet whose mission they acknowledged, and thereby drew away many souls to the punishment of Hell.

...Peace be unto you, dear friend, from our Lord Christ, who has done away with death and conquered Satan, and mercy and blessing from Him, to save you from the snares of the Devil, in which till now you have been involved...²⁰²

There is a distinct possibility that this letter was written by Abbot Hugh of Cluny²⁰³ (1049-1119). Al-Bāḡī, on the other hand, was an adviser to the king of Saragossa, Al-Muqtadir (1046-1081).

The first point to be noted is that the above letter is quite friendly in tone. Nonetheless, at the outset the said letter embraces a high Christian Christology. Moreover, the letter presents Christianity as containing all things necessary for salvation. Thus, Muḥammad is dismissed as the instrument of Satan. Such a view of Muḥammad is reminiscent of similar views, already analysed, in the writings of John of Damascus, Nicetas of Byzantium, and Leo's Letter to 'Umar. The 'Monk of France' rehearses the negative opinions of his Christian predecessors and, thereby, links Muḥammad with Satan. But such a derogatory assertion about Muḥammad has no substance whatsoever. In short, the author in question shows no originality of thought in his response to Muḥammad. That is,

he arrogantly assumes that Christians can learn nothing from one who was in league with Satan.

Peter the Venerable (1094 to 1156)

The next Christian response to Muḥammad comes from the writings of Peter the Venerable. In 1122 Peter became Abbot of the important monastery at Cluny. Majolus (948 to 994) was Abbot of Cluny when he was captured by the Muslims in 972. Further, the 'Monk of France', probably the Abbot of Cluny, was in contact with at least one Muslim leader. Thus, it is clear enough then that Cluny, from an early stage, was associated with the challenge of Islam. It is quite possible that the writings of Peter the Venerable on Islam represent a systematic extension of Cluny's association with the Christian-Muslim encounter. Peter formed a team of translators and engaged them on the translation, into Latin, of religious books on Islam, including the Qur'ān. Peter, troubled by the lack of spirituality in the Crusading spirit, sought to restore the spirit of love within Christendom's response to Islam. The common attitude of the Christians of Peter's day to Islam is summed up by one of his contemporaries, Robert of Ketton, as follows:

...There are Christian priests so overcome with hatred that they declare that the conversion of the Moslems is not even desirable: they say in the presence of all, either by ignorance or negligence, that His (God's) beautiful portion of the human race (the Moslems) should hear nothing of His nuptials.²⁰⁴

Peter, in responding to an imaginary Muslim audience, portrays the Muslims' conception of the notion of divine revelation with regard to the work of Muḥammad. Thus, Peter states:

...As he was the last of all the prophets in order, and like a seal of all the prophets; as he was not the author, but the bearer of the divine law; not the Lord, but the messenger: he received the heavenly commands which were sent to him by God through Gabriel, and nothing more nor less. What he had received he transmitted to our fathers and to us, to be observed...²⁰⁵

Peter, via the above comments, shows an appreciation of the Islamic understanding of the rôle of Muḥammad as the messenger of God. Nonetheless, Peter considers that Muḥammad was not a true prophet, according to the Biblical meaning of the term. Commenting on Muḥammad, Peter states:

...while he affirms himself the prophet of God almost ad nauseam, and affirms it and repeats it, he says nothing about things to come, utters nothing prophetic.²⁰⁶

Peter's critique of Muḥammad's prophethood is based upon some very spurious reasoning. For one thing, the notion of the Biblical prophets looking into God's crystal ball and predicting the shape of things to come is absurd. Certainly, the Bible portrays the prophets making predictions that God was shaping the course of events according to his purpose. However, these predictions were related to the immediate future, which impinged on the present. The Biblical prophets were primarily concerned with the present.²⁰⁷ Consequently, the fact that Muḥammad did not foretell future events does not nullify his claim to prophethood.

Further, Peter rehearses the old Christian argument that Muḥammad was 'unable to perform miracles'.²⁰⁸ Thus, according to Peter, 'Muḥammad fails to meet the criteria of a true prophet'²⁰⁹ and, thereby, he is 'not the Seal of the Prophets'.²¹⁰ As has been pointed out, the notion that miracles somehow prove the divine authority of the miracle-worker is a major misconception. In short, Peter's rejection of Muḥammad is based upon flawed reasoning. Yet, the Toledan

Collection represents an important stage in the history of the Christian-Muslim encounter. First, Peter was actually familiar with what Muslims were saying about Muḥammad. Second, Peter's writings provided a medium for Western Christians to learn something about Muslims. Unfortunately, Peter was unable to establish any meaningful contact with Islam. Still, Peter's written works, and those of his translators, helped to shape Christian responses to Muḥammad until the seventeenth century. Perhaps Peter's greatest legacy to Christian students of Islam is portrayed in his words as follows

...I do not attack you - Muslims - as our people often do, by arms, but by words; not by force, but by reason; not in hatred, but in love.²¹¹

Thomas Aquinas (1225 to 1274)

In line with the sentiments expressed by Peter the Venerable the thirteenth century gave rise, via the new Mendicant Orders, to a definite Christian endeavour to forsake forceful means to re-establish Christ's kingdom, and to organise missions to win all men, including Muslims, by peaceful means. The Studia Linguarum (Language Centres) were founded by Raymund of Peñafort (1180 to 1275). These centres were for Christian missionaries to learn the local language and culture of their designated area of service. Raymund engaged the Christian scholar, Thomas Aquinas, to prepare a book of Christian doctrine which could be used by missionaries among non-Christians. Thomas Aquinas, in all probability, responded to the request by writing his Summa Contra Gentiles. In one section of this work Thomas refers to Muḥammad as follows:

...The point is clear in the case of Mohammed. He seduced the people by promises of carnal pleasure to which concupiscence of the flesh goads us...Indeed, the truths that he taught he mingled with many fables and with doctrines of

the greatest falsity. He did not bring forth any signs produced in a supernatural way, which alone fittingly gives witness to divine inspiration.

...On the contrary, Mohammed said that he was sent in the power of his arms - which are signs not lacking even to robbers and tyrants. What is more, no wise men, men trained in things divine and human, believed in him from the beginning. Those who believed in him were brutal men and desert wanderers, utterly ignorant of all divine teaching, through whose numbers Mohammed forced others to become his followers by the violence of his arms.²¹²

All of the above criticisms put forward by Aquinas, in a bid to denounce Muḥammad, can find no support from the objective account of Muḥammad's work as presented in the first chapter of this thesis. In the first place, there is no evidence to indicate that Muḥammad promoted Islam by tempting prospective Muslims with sexual delights. Moreover, as stated before, the absence of miracles from Muḥammad's ministry does not invalidate his claim to prophethood. Also, Aquinas' critique of the first Muslims as being brutal and ignorant men is grossly unfair. For instance, many of the first followers of Islam were young men from influential Meccan families. Business persons like Muḥammad's first wife Khadījah, and the merchant Abū Bakr, and others of similar status were among the first to embrace Islam. Of course, slaves were attracted to Islam with the most famous one being Bilāl, a black Abyssinian. The pagans of Mecca opposed Muḥammad and the early Muslims. Some of the said Muslims died under torture, and others were sent to Abyssinia to escape persecution. Therefore, the first Muslims were sincere in their response to Islam. Can such sincerity be equated with brutal and ignorant men? Further, it is untrue to assert that Muḥammad coerced others by force to accept Islam. After thirteen years of patient preaching and bearing with trials of all kinds in Mecca, Muḥammad and his followers migrated to Yathrib (later Medina). Certainly, according to the early

biographies of Muḥammad, the Muslims employed physical force against the Meccans. Indeed, throughout the greater part of its history Islam has considered political supremacy as one means for ensuring recognition of its doctrine. But conversion by force need not always follow political supremacy. Muslims of the thirteenth century embraced the use of force to forward the spread of Islam.²¹³ Hence, according to Gaudeul, 'Thomas and Christian writers of that time had to accept Islam as it was presented through its own spokesmen'.²¹⁴

Francis of Assisi (1182 to 1226)

Francis of Assisi provides the next significant Christian response to Muḥammad. Francis, via his conversion to Christianity and pursuit of poverty, founded the Franciscan Order. During the fifth Crusade, Francis encountered Muslims in Egypt and impressed the Sultan al-Malik al Kāmil. Still, no Muslims converted to Christianity. Francis, on his return from the East, to Europe, formulated a Rule of Life for the Franciscan community. With regard to Franciscans ministering to Muslims or other non-Christians, the Rule states:

...The Brethren who go there may adopt two sorts of behaviour in the Spirit. One is that of avoiding disputes and controversies, submitting instead to every human authority for the sake of the Lord declaring themselves to be Christian.

...The other, when they discern it to be God's will, is to proclaim the word of God, inviting people to believe in the Almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Creator of all, in the Son who is Saviour and Redeemer, (calling them) to be baptized and become Christians...²¹⁵

The above rule does not advocate any express criticism of Muḥammad. Yet, many Franciscan missionaries were killed in

Muslim countries. Why did such a seemingly passive approach to Muslims lead to so many Franciscans being killed by Muslims in 1220 and in 1227? With regard to evangelism among Muslims, it appears that many Franciscans opted for the second way, as presented above, but without the necessary discernment as stated by Francis. That is, the majority of the Franciscans in question favoured direct preaching in a bid to convert Muslims to Christianity. As mentioned earlier, such a direct approach to Christian evangelism among Muslims was a capital offence in Muslim countries. Further, Christian missionaries of the period under review, including the Franciscans, thought that all error, or what they perceived to be error, must be openly criticised and condemned. For example, it is alleged that Francis said:

...My children, God bade me send you to the land of the Saracens to preach and proclaim his faith and to attack Muhammad's law...²¹⁶

Also, Jacques de Vitry, commenting on the Franciscan appraisal of Muhammad, states:

...the Saracens listened to the Brethren with pleasure as long as they proclaimed the faith of Christ and the doctrines of the Gospel. But when they began to contradict Muhammad openly calling him a liar and a cheat, the people began to beat them...²¹⁷

The Franciscans' portrayal of Muhammad as a liar and cheat is an example of empty Christian rhetoric which has no historical foundation whatsoever. Also, the direct missionary approach espoused by the Franciscans, though motivated by love, led to many of their number being martyred which only served to damage any hope of meaningful relations between Christians and Muslims. Zwemer, commenting on this point, states:

...Nevertheless, St. Francis and his brother friars continued their love for Muslims. They passed on the torch to Raymond Lull with the idea that it is better to create Christians than to destroy Muslims...²¹⁸

Raymond Lull (1235 to c.1316)

Raymond Lull was a lay missionary who worked with the Franciscans. Lull was born of wealthy parents at Palma, Majorca. He was well educated and became companion and tutor to the sons of King James of Aragon. Lull, at the age of thirty-one, embraced Christianity and began to develop a strategy for Christian missions to Muslims and Jews. He was prepared to suffer martyrdom for the missionary cause, and to write numerous²¹⁹ books in defence of Christianity. In 1290 the University of Montpellier was founded, and in the faculties of both Arabic and theology Lull continued his research into Islam for many years. Thus, it is clear that Raymond Lull had a good knowledge of Islam. Accordingly, Peers states:

...It would seem that...he had consulted the Koran...and the Proverbs of Mahomet, and the glosses of those who have expounded the Koran and the Proverbs...He shows no sign of having consulted them closely, or copied from them word for word,, yet wherever his citations are tested they prove to be exact in substance, though not in letter.²²⁰

In his Book of the Gentile (1272-3) Lull presents a debate between a Gentile Christian and a Saracen. Indeed, Peers considers that, 'in a few passages the voice of the Gentile is the voice of Lull himself.'²²¹ A relevant section of the said debate, beginning with the Saracen, is as follows:

...Since Mahomet is honoured so greatly in the world, and by so many people, it follows that in

him justice accords with the charity of God...Whence it follows that, by reason of the honour wherewith Mahomet is honoured by God, Mahomet is a prophet.

...From that which thou sayest, answered the Gentile, it follows that Jesus Christ, Who is so greatly honoured in this world, is God; and that His apostles, and the other martyrs, who are so greatly honoured likewise, died in the way of truth. For, if God suffered not the dead that died in falsehood to be honoured in this world, then that which is said of Christ would of necessity be truth; and, if this were so, then thy law would not be true, neither would Mahomet be worthy of honour nor a prophet.²²²

The above sentiments, as expressed by the Gentile, may reflect Lull's own response to Muhammad. If so, it is clear that Lull is convinced of the supremacy of Jesus over Muhammad, and that Muhammad was in error of the truth in all respects. However, Lull's argument in favour of Christianity, as presented above, is based upon dubious logic. In other words, Lull assumes, without objective evidence, that Muhammad was guilty of falsehood. Thus, Lull's negative response to Muhammad was influenced by pre-conceived ideas which had their genesis in earlier Christian responses to Islam.

Lull, at the age of sixty, travelled to Tunis and there he encountered educated Muslims and confronted them with the message of Christianity. Lull's method of evangelism among the Muslims of Tunis is recorded by his biographer as follows:

...and the said reverend master began day after day to seek out those that were most learned in the sect of Mahomet, declaring to them how that he had studied the law of the Christians, whose faith and its foundations he knew well; and now had come there to learn of their sect and belief; and if it were found that this was better than that of the Christians, and they could prove it to him, he would assuredly become a Moor.

...When many had heard this, all the learned Moors who were in the city of Tunis gathered together, alleging the strongest reasons which they knew or could find on behalf of their sect; and when the said reverend master had answered these reasons readily and given satisfaction therein, they were all astonished and confounded....²²³

It seems that Lull, via the above-cited approach, was quite successful in communicating with the Muslims in question. Moreover, many of the said Muslims might have embraced Christianity had not a member of Lull's audience reported him to the Muslim authorities for causing antagonism. Consequently, the Muslims condemned Lull to death, but later his sentence was changed to banishment and he left Tunis for Naples.

In 1307, Lull journeyed to the North African town of Bugia where he preached in public and attempted, by argument and love, to prove to the Muslims the superiority of Christianity over Islam. Accordingly, the Muslims were greatly annoyed with Lull and cast him into prison for some months. Lull, despite his imprisonment, was treated kindly and allowed to debate with learned Muslims. Commenting on this point, Lull's contemporary biographer states:

...Each day came the Moors, praying him to be converted to the law of Mahomet. But he answered them saying: 'And if you yourselves will renounce this your false sect, and will believe in the Holy Name of Jesus, I promise you eternal life and treasures that will never fail you'.²²⁴

From the above remarks it is clear that once again Lull fails to consider the originality of Islam, and denounces it as a false sect.

In any case, Lull was released from prison and deported. His ship, however, foundered off the Italian coast and he survived and landed at Pisa. Hitherto, Lull had espoused a

missionary approach to Muslims which was based upon persuasion by argument and love. Yet, during the period under review, Lull called for a new crusade to assail the Muslims of Spain, North Africa, and the Holy Land. In 1314, at the age of eighty-two, Lull returned to North Africa and engaged in debate with some of the leaders of Islam. Early in 1316 he set off for Tunis where he openly criticised Islam and proclaimed the Christian faith. He was stoned to death by the Muslims. All in all, it is difficult to evaluate Raymond Lull's theological response to Muḥammad. Lull was zealous in his missionary endeavours which in general embraced the notions of argument and love. He put great confidence in the power of reason, but he was impatient in his quest for the evangelisation of Muslims. Lull's gentle and reasoned approach to Muslims was novel, but his response to Muḥammad was negative.

Gregory Palamas (1296 to 1360)

Another important written Christian response to Muḥammad comes from the writings of Gregory Palamas. Gregory was Archbishop of Thessalonika, and a member of the hesychasts.²²⁵ From 1354 to 1355 Gregory was imprisoned by the Turks. Two letters²²⁶ written by Gregory during his captivity shed some light on his response to Muḥammad. Gregory, commenting on the Muslims' failure to appreciate Christ, states

...They, too, although they knew Christ - for they confess that he is word and spirit of God, and also that he was born from a virgin, and that he did and taught like God, that he ascended into heaven, that he remains immortal, and that he is going to come to judge the entire world - although, therefore, they knew Christ this way, they did not honour him as Christ, that is as God-man Word. Instead, they exchanged the truth for falsehood and they believed, honoured and followed a mere man, mortal and buried. Muhammad that is, rather than the God-man, the ever-living and eternal Word.²²⁷

From the above paragraph, it is evident that Gregory assesses Muḥammad via Christian eyes. Gregory sees the Muslims as St. Paul saw the pagans in Romans 1:18 to 32. That is to say, as people who knew Christ as God, but declined to accept the notion of Christ's divinity. However, the Muslims never recognised Christ as God, and the above-cited Quranic titles of Jesus, as previously shown, in no way support the Christian belief in the divinity of Christ. Therefore, it is obvious that Gregory has a limited knowledge of the Qur'ān, but he is, nevertheless, convinced that Jesus is vastly superior to Muḥammad.

Moreover, Gregory in conversation with his Muslim captors is questioned about Muḥammad as follows:

...At this point the Chiones interrupted him again, and the presiding Palapanos, after he called for silence, said to the bishop, 'The master demands from you to answer the question how we accept Christ, love him, respect him, confess him to be God's word and breath, and we also place his mother near to God, and yet you do not accept our prophet nor do you love him?' Then the bishop said: 'He who does not believe in the words of a teacher cannot love the teacher himself; that is why we do not love Muḥammad.'²²⁸

...When he finished he turned the speech to me saying, 'Why then, do you not accept our prophet or do you not believe that his book came down from heaven?' I said to him again: 'As far as Muḥammad is concerned we do not find that he is either witnessed to by the prophets, or that he did anything unusual or worthwhile leading to faith. That is why we do not believe in him or his book.'²²⁹

First of all, Gregory's above-cited remarks portray Muḥammad as a false teacher, and as one without any divine credentials whatsoever. Such accusations are not valid. For instance, the Qur'ān itself bears witness to the notion of Muḥammad's prophethood and divine mission. Christians use the Bible to bolster up their claims in respect of Jesus. Likewise,

Muslims can appeal to the Qur'ān to validate their understanding of Muḥammad as the messenger of God. Moreover, Gregory's additional accusation that Muḥammad did nothing of significance via his mission is grossly inaccurate. The event of the Qur'ān and the rise and spread of Islam are most certainly very significant phenomena which have greatly influenced a large section of mankind.

Furthermore, Gregory goes on to launch a scathing attack on Muḥammad as follows:

...Muḥammad marched from the East and he progressed victoriously to the West. He did so, however, by means of war and the sword, with pillage enslavement and executions, none of which has its origin in God, the righteous One, but he is advancing the will of him who from the beginning was the destroyer of man.²³⁰

Gregory, via the above comments, claims that Muḥammad propagated Islam by war and the sword. When Muḥammad and his followers moved to Yathrib (later Medina) they employed the use of force to advance Islam. However, the said use of force does not necessarily negate the worth of Islam. In any case, according to the Old Testament,²³¹ the Hebrews occupied Canaan by forceful means, and their struggle to obtain land entailed much suffering and bloodshed, and the slaughter of many Canaanite natives. Yet, the Hebrews believed that Yahweh, their God, was with them in the conflict, leading them to victoriously enter the land. In just the same way the Muslims in question were equally convinced that Islam should embrace the use of force for the greater good of mankind. Similarly, Christians at different periods in history have used force in an attempt to extend the boundaries of Christendom; as, for example, during the Crusades. In general, Gregory fails to give a satisfactory Christian answer to the Muslim query, namely, 'Why do you not accept and love Muḥammad?'

John Wyclif (1320 to 1384)

The Oxford theologian, John Wyclif, had read the Qur'ān, probably in the Latin translation instigated by Peter the Venerable and translated by Robert of Ketton with a Muslim friend. Wyclif embraced the negative notions of his day with regard to Islam. Nonetheless, he was critical of the Church of his time, and he likened the errors committed by Muḥammad with the mistakes made by the Church. Wyclif, referring to corrupt Christians as 'Western Mahomets', states:

...Just as some who are in the church are damned, so others outside the church are saved. If you object that, if this is so, we cannot call the Jews unbelievers, the Saracens heretics, the Greeks schismatics, and so on, I reply: Man can be saved from any sect, even from among the Saracens, if he places no obstacle in the way of salvation. From Islam and from other sects, those who at the moment of death believe in the Lord Jesus Christ will be judged to be faithful Christians.²³²

The above thoughts possess a measure of humility. Nevertheless, John is convinced that Islam is nothing but a sect from which its members need deliverance through faith in Christ. Thus, it follows that John Wyclif was negative in his response to Muḥammad. However, John's appeal to the corrupt members of the church to compare themselves with the Muslims was perhaps an incentive for Christians to engage in the objective study of Islam.

In conclusion, it is clear enough that the various Christian responses to Muḥammad, as reviewed in the present section of this chapter, are based upon negative pre-conceived myths and misperceptions, which negate any objective study of the message conveyed by Muḥammad. Indeed, some of the Christian writers in question responded in love to the Muslim understanding of the divine legitimacy of Muḥammad's life and work. Nonetheless, all of the Christian responses to

Muhammad, as presented above, fail to positively consider his claim to prophethood. Kerr, commenting on the Christian character assassination of Muhammad during the period under review, states:-

...Suffice it to say that the massive literature, exhaustively analysed by Norman Daniel in his Islam and the West: the Making of an Image, witnesses an abject failure of Christian theology to deal creatively with a post-Jesus claimant to prophetic status as a recipient of divine revelation. Theological enterprise gave way almost entirely to fabulous story-telling and slander.²³³

All in all, the great Christian missionary endeavour of the twelfth century had lost its vision by 1350. Christian and Muslim Apologists had refined their respective defensive answers which resulted in a mutual theological stalemate. In short, there was no fruitful encounter in the theatre of Christian-Muslim relations.

Section 2.3: Christian Responses to Muhammad: Fifteenth to Twentieth Centuries

The Turks first appear in European history in the middle of the fourteenth century. Driven by the Mongols from Central Asia to Armenia, and extending their territory westwards into Asia Minor, they derived their name of Osmanlis (corrupted to Ottomans) from the first Sultan, Osman (1258 to 1326). The Christian Church was greatly distressed when the Ottomans captured Constantinople in 1453. For example, the humanist - diplomat Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini, via his letter to Pope Nicholas V, reflects Christian concern about the fall of Constantinople as follows:

...I grieve that countless basilicas of the saints, so admirably built, will be subject to destruction or to the defilement of Muhammad...²³⁴

The above remarks were motivated by fear and anger, and they appear to be irrevocably hostile to Muhammad. Nonetheless, a series of Church leaders sought to find a Christian approach to the challenge of political and religious diversity during the period under review.

For instance, John of Segovia (1400 to 1458) was a native of Spain and from the age of twenty he decided to devote his life to find a new approach to Islam. John, believing that existing translations of the Qur'ān were flawed, set about the task of accurately translating the Qur'ān.²³⁵ John hoped to expose the Qur'ān as a fraud via critical study of the text. With regard to the conversion of Muslims, it was John's wish that Christians must never embrace war in the face of Muslim expansion. Also, as Christian preaching was not permitted in Muslim countries, John favoured the notion of a 'Contraferentia' - a Conference with Muslim scholars in an effort to examine critically the text of the Qur'ān. John's ideas, as cited above, were sent by letter to various Church leaders, including Nicholas of Cusa. Thus, did

Nicholas adopt John's suggestions?

Nicholas of Cusa (1401 to 1464)

Nicholas of Cusa was a native of Cues (Germany). Nicholas was a scholar and a cardinal (1448) of the Christian church. Indeed, Nicholas dreamed of religious unity in a single faith, and he welcomed the suggestions voiced by John of Segovia with regard to the critical study of the Qur'ān via a meeting of Christian and Muslim scholars. Nicholas associates Muḥammad with Moses and Christ as the three who embraced monotheism and the notion of the goodness of God. Nicholas presents Christ as superior to Muḥammad, but only because of Christ's perfect knowledge. Accordingly, Nicholas states:

...If Muḥammad disagrees with Christ in any way it has to be either ignorance that makes him do so, since he did not know nor understand Christ, or perversity of intention because he did not intend to lead men to that goal of peace to which Christ showed the way, but under the guise of that goal he sought his own honour.²³⁶

However, upon reflection Nicholas dismisses the above possibility of Muḥammad's 'perversity of intention' by attributing it to mere ignorance. Nicholas states

...We believe it must be held that ignorance is the cause of error and malice. For nobody knowing Christ disagrees with him or disparages him.²³⁷

From the Muslim perspective, the above thoughts constitute blasphemy in that they portray Muḥammad as one outside the true understanding of the Christ-event. Still, according to Nicholas, it was only through ignorance that Muḥammad did not recognise Christ.

All in all, Nicholas' perception of Muḥammad was, from the

Christian viewpoint of that time, very generous. Later on, however, Nicholas vehemently condemns Muhammad and the Qur'ān as follows:

...There is found in the Qur'ān the promise of paradise where...beautiful black virgins will be found, their eyes having large and whitest whites. No German in the world, no matter how given over to vices of the flesh, would desire such as these.²³⁸

...I was dumbfounded about that which it (the Qur'ān) said over and over again about girls and their breasts and so often about bestial intercourse in paradise, saying in chapter 80 that that is the best reward of God to the believers, and I felt shame within myself to read that filth...For nobody talks about such filthy things in so filthy a manner unless he is full of all such filthiness.²³⁹

Consequently, how can Nicholas' former conciliatory response to Muḥammad be reconciled with the above critique of the Prophet of Islam? Nicholas had access to only the Latin Qur'ān, translated by Ketton. In many ways this translation of the Qur'ān was defective.²⁴⁰ For example, Ketton renders Qur'ān 44:54 as promising the Muslims that in paradise 'they will marry girls with large clear eyes whose whites are the whitest and the girls are the blackest'.²⁴¹ The correct translation of this Quranic verse is 'they will marry girls with large clear eyes whose whites are the whitest and whose pupils are the blackest'.²⁴²

It is clear that Nicholas' above critique of Muḥammad was prompted, at least in part, by the limitations of a defective translation of the Qur'ān. Also, the absurd mediaeval Christian portrayal of Muḥammad must have had some bearing upon Nicholas as he sought to respond to Islam. Further, Nicholas of Cusa and John of Segovia were responding to Islam in the wake of the Turkish conquest of Constantinople. Nonetheless, Nicholas' response to Muḥammad was positive and

intellectually honest within the limits of his understanding. Accordingly, Biechler states:

...Evaluated alongside the thought of other theologians, Nicholas of Cusa's intellectual encounter with Muhammad and Islam, especially considering that it took place in a cultural atmosphere superheated with anti-Muslim invective, stands out in dramatic and positive contrast.²⁴³

Martin Luther (1483-1546)

Another Christian response to Muhammad is extant in the writings of Martin Luther. Luther was professor of Scripture at Wittenberg University, and founder of the German Reformation. In the initial stages of the Ottoman expansion, Luther was opposed to violence and war. In later years, however, Luther did permit war against the Ottomans, but he considered that the enemy in question was in reality a punishment from God. Such a notion is reminiscent of Ezekiel's message that the fall of Jerusalem to Nebuchadnezzar (587 B.C.) was divinely ordained, and that rebellion against Babylon was treason against God.²⁴⁴ Hence, for Ezekiel, and Luther, the only way to defeat such enemies was by self-repentance in order to find God. Thus, Luther states:

...To make war against the Turks is nothing else than to strive against God, who is punishing our sins by means of the Turks.²⁴⁵

In general, Luther was not impressed by Islam. He seems to portray Islam as a faith composite of Judaism, Christianity and paganism.²⁴⁶ Further, the person and work of Muhammad did not evoke any great interest from Luther. Referring to Muhammad, Luther comments:

...He praises and exalts himself highly, and boasts that he has talked with God and the angels.²⁴⁷

Moreover, Luther dismisses any suggestion that the Qur'ān is divinely inspired. Luther states:

...I will not read from the Koran of Mohammed, since it is utterly uncouth, with fabricated, deliberate, shameful lies, which openly permits murder, adultery, unchastity, the destruction of marriage, and other shameful abominations and deceptions.²⁴⁸

The above allegations are rather harsh and the product of negative Christian polemic which has no basis in the objective study of the Qur'ān. The Christian notion of 'Justification by Faith alone' was of paramount importance for the Protestant Reformers. Indeed, their critique of other religions was always judged in the light of this principle, and Islam was no exception. Luther refers to the Prophet of Islam as:

...Mohammed with his doctrine of works...He believes that he will become holy and be saved by works.²⁴⁹

This statement is not strictly correct. That is to say, Islam is certainly a legalistic religion²⁵⁰, but it is also a religion which advocates continuity between works and faith. Furthermore, Luther severely attacks the Muslim practice of polygamy as follows:

...Mohammed's Koran thinks nothing of marriage, but permits everyone to take wives as he will. Therefore, it is customary among the Turks for one man to have ten or twenty wives and to desert or sell any of them that he will, when he will...²⁵¹

The Islamic provision for polygamy has sometimes been misused. Nevertheless, this provision has in the past helped to stabilise Muslim societies by making it possible for almost every single person to marry and have a home in one way or another. Moreover, while the provision for polygamy

may enhance certain social systems, it is not necessarily recommended or preferred by Islam. For instance, Muḥammad was married to one woman, his first wife Khadījah, for twenty-five years. It was only after her death that he began to contract other marriages, each one to cement friendships, promote alliances or teach some lesson to the community.

Finally, Luther was magnanimous enough to see some good in the Muslims. Hence, he exalts Muslim conduct in preference to the example of some Christians. Accordingly, Luther states:

...It is said there is no better temporal rule anywhere than among the Turks who have neither spiritual nor temporal law, but only their Koran; and we must confess that there is no more shameful rule than among us, with our spiritual and temporal law, so that there is no estate which lives according to the light of nature, still less according to Holy Scripture.²⁵²

It would seem then that Luther was content to rehearse the negative Christian polemic of his day with regard to Muḥammad and Islam. Yet, Luther's independent mode of thought led him to promote tolerance and self-judgement in Christian-Muslim relations.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, European powers began to establish their maritime power and to set up trading posts in countries which were formerly under Muslim control. The advent of the Industrial Revolution, and the needs of capitalist countries for increasing resources, led European powers to acquire more territory which had previously been ruled by Muslims. Yet, in spite of their waning power in the world, most Muslims continued to embrace Islam. Indeed, the Christian colonial powers seemed to have had a sincere concern to promote Christianity amongst Muslims.

Henry Martyn (1781 to 1812)

Henry Martyn represents the first modern Christian missionary to Islam. He accepted the chaplaincy of the East India Company and arrived at Calcutta in 1806. Following an encounter with Roman Catholic friars and Muslims at San Salvador, en route to India, Martyn relates:

...I turned away, and with a deep sigh cried to God to interfere in behalf of His gospel; for in the course of one hour I had seen three shocking examples of the reign and power of the devil, in the form of Popish and Mahomedan delusion, and that of the natural man.²⁵³

Undoubtedly, the above comments show Martyn as one influenced by the absurd medieval Christian responses to Muḥammad. Consequently, Martyn equated Islam with the work of the devil.

Martyn, when in Persia, engaged in conversation with a group of influential Muslims. One of the said Muslims challenged Martyn with the following ultimatum:

...You had better say 'God is God, and Muḥammad is the prophet of God'.²⁵⁴

To which Martyn replied:

...I said, 'God is God', but instead of adding 'Muḥammad is the prophet of God', I said, 'and Jesus is the Son of God'.²⁵⁵

The Muslims in question were furious at the above reply and proceeded to verbally attack Martyn with the words:

...He is neither born no begets...What will you say when your tongue is burned out for this blasphemy?²⁵⁶

Certainly, Martyn reflected medieval negative notions about Muḥammad and Islam. But, according to the Gaudeul, Martyn set out 'to appreciate whatever was best in his Muslim acquaintances and ascribe such to the activity of God'.²⁵⁷ Time after time Martyn stressed that the Scriptures of Christianity and Islam should be used as a starting point to promote Christian-Muslim relations. Accordingly, he translated the New Testament into Hindustani, Persian and Arabic before his early death in 1812 at the age of thirty-one.

Karl Gottlieb Pfänder (1803 to 1865)

The German Christian missionary, Karl Gottlieb Pfänder, at the beginning of his career in 1829 responded to Muḥammad and Islam by writing a book entitled, The Balance of Truth. Subsequently, it has been translated into Persian (1835), Urdu (1840), Turkish and Arabic (1865). In the introduction of this book Pfänder lists his main objective as follows:

...For the question at issue is, 'Who is in our day the Saviour of the world: the Lord Jesus Christ, or Muḥammad?' This is not a subject for strife and quarrelling and bitterness, but for reverent, candid, fearless, and prayerful inquiry.²⁵⁸

Pfänder goes on to point out that Muslim belief in the peerlessness of the Qur'ān has been questioned by some learned Arabs. Hence, Pfänder states:

...The style of the Qur'ān has not seemed to these men miraculous, and to be a sufficient proof that Muḥammad was Divinely commissioned...

...Even were it granted, however, that the style of the Qur'ān is superior to that of any other Arabic book, that would not prove its inspiration or its descent upon Muḥammad.²⁵⁹

Thus, the above remarks tend to question the authenticity of the Qur'ān and, by implication, the sincerity of Muḥammad's claim to prophethood. Pfänder's suggestion that the Qur'ān may not be perfect is similar, though more courteous, in style to that of the arguments espoused by al-Kindī, as previously discussed.

Further, Pfänder stresses, quite rightly, that the Qur'ān attributes no miracles to Muḥammad. Moreover, Pfänder rejects the testimony of Islamic Traditions which portray Muḥammad as a miracle-worker. Pfänder states:

...Be it noted that such miracles...were exactly of the kind which the Quraish demanded from Muḥammad. Had he wrought them, then undoubtedly the Qur'ān would have mentioned some of them. Instead of doing so, it tells us that he was not a Ruler but a Warner, and also informs us why God did not give him the power to work miracles at all.²⁶⁰

Pfänder proceeds to contrast Muḥammad's inability to perform miracles, as suggested by the Qur'ān, with Jesus' ability, as portrayed by the New Testament, to perform the same. Therefore, Pfänder is in no doubt that Muḥammad is inferior to Jesus. But, as previously stated, the ability to perform miracles cannot be used as objective proof of the divine legitimacy of the miracle-worker. Indeed, Watt considers Pfänder's critique of Muḥammad and Islam to be 'mainly in accordance with the current distorted perception'.²⁶¹

Thomas Carlyle (1795 to 1881)

An interesting Christian response to Muḥammad is found in the writings of Thomas Carlyle. In 1840 Carlyle delivered a series of lectures on 'Heroes and Hero Worship'. The lecture entitled, 'The Hero as Prophet' dealt with Muḥammad. Hence, Carlyle states:

...We have chosen Mahomet not as the most eminent

Prophet; but as the one we are freest to speak of. He is by no means the truest of Prophets; but I do esteem him as a true one. Further, as there is no danger of our becoming, any of us, Mahometans, I mean to say all the good of him I justly can.

Our current hypothesis about Mahomet, that he was a scheming Impostor, a Falsehood incarnate, that his religion is a mere mass of quackery and fantasy, begins really to be now untenable to any one. The lies, which well-meaning zeal has heaped round this man, are disgraceful to ourselves only...The word this man spoke has been the life-guidance now of a hundred - and - eighty millions of men these twelve-hundred years...

Are we to suppose that it was a miserable piece of spiritual legerdemain, this which so many creatures of the Almighty have lived by and died by? I, for my part, cannot form any such supposition.²⁶²

Thus, it is clear that Carlyle accepts Muḥammad as a true prophet, but not the 'truest of the prophets'. Carlyle, perhaps influenced by Goethe²⁶³, utterly refutes the medieval polemical presentation of Muḥammad; and stresses the fact of Muḥammad's sincerity, and that of his followers.

Next, Carlyle is positive in his response to the Qur'ān when he asserts that 'sincerity in all senses seems to be to merit the Koran'.²⁶⁴ Even the Christian claim that Islam is a religion of violence is dismissed by Carlyle as follows:

...The sword indeed; but where will you get your sword! Every new opinion, at its starting, is precisely in a minority of one.²⁶⁵

Hence, Carlyle was convinced that Muḥammad had made a definite contribution to the religious development of mankind. Moreover, according to Watt, the significance of Carlyle's lecture on Muḥammad is that:

...it is an important step forward in the process of reversing the medieval world-picture of Islam as the great enemy, and rehabilitating its founder, Muḥammad.²⁶⁶

But, all of this having been said, it is important to stress that Carlyle goes on to speak of Muḥammad seeing through:

...that rubbish of Arab idolatries, argumentative theologies, traditions, subtleties, rumours and hypotheses of Greeks and Jews, so as to penetrate into the kernel of the matter.²⁶⁷

Daniel²⁶⁸ suggests that the above sentiments reflect Carlyle's acceptance of the traditional Christian viewpoint that Muḥammad pirated Jewish, Christian and pagan religions in order to create Islam. Further, with regard to the question of Muḥammad's inspiration, as understood by Carlyle, Daniel states:

...what he really thinks is that Muḥammad's inspiration as Hero was its own justification, so that he might call it Gabriel, or anything else, without falsifying it. Yet this acceptance of some source of inspiration that does not come unambiguously from God is a Romantic, and not a Christian or an Islamic idea; mediaeval Christians would doubtless have seen inspiration originating other than in God as confirmation of their own theory of diabolical possession.

Carlyle did much to purify the Western attitude to Muhammad, and even to Islam, but he failed to establish his appreciation on any sound theoretic basis. It is the practical part of his lecture, criticising the old views, which is most valuable.²⁶⁹

Frederick Denison Maurice (1805 to 1872)

Frederick Denison Maurice, a liberal Christian theologian, was greatly impressed by Carlyle's lecture on Muḥammad. Maurice, writing to his own wife about this lecture, states:

...The lecture was by far the most animated and vehement I ever heard from him. It was a passionate defence of Mahomet..I felt throughout how much more kind and tolerant towards the truth in all forms of faith and opinion he can be, and should be who does in his heart believe Jesus Christ to be the Son of God and that all systems

are feeling after Him as the common centre of the world.²⁷⁰

The above thoughts are well-meaning and represent a step in the quest for positive Christian-Muslim relations. Still, the sentiments under review are condescending in that they present Islam as a religion not yet enlightened by the truth of Christianity. Maurice does not consider Islam as a religion in its own right.

William Muir (1819 to 1905)

Next, the influential Christian, William Muir, wrote a study of The Life of Mahomet, first published in 1861. Muir proceeds to draw a parallel between the temptation of Jesus Christ, tempted to seek spiritual and lawful ends by unlawful means; and Muḥammad's temptation to make a compromise between religion and the world. In Muir's opinion Muḥammad fell and the result was;

...a politico-religious system, forming the very closest combination imaginable between worldliness and spirituality, between good and evil.²⁷¹

The above thoughts have a hint of logic, but are they true to the facts of history? Certainly, Muḥammad was the political ruler of Arabia and succeeded as a patriotic Arab. The question is whether all this came about as an afterthought, or was it in Muḥammad's mind at the outset of his career? Or, to put it another way, is the notion that Muḥammad at Mecca was a religious reformer pure and simple, and then at Medina passed on to the position of a secular ruler a correct one? Perhaps there can be no such division in his career, because from the first there is continuity in Muḥammad's public life. Thus, Muḥammad at Mecca, pleading for the recognition of his teaching, is in reality the seed and precursor of the

military commander. In both cases he is in essence the same man. Only in Mecca he is trying to succeed with his plan, and in Medina he actually succeeds.

Without doubt, Muir was hostile and negative in his response to Muḥammad. Yet, commenting on the question of Muḥammad's sincerity, Muir states:

...It is strongly corroborative of Muḥammad's sincerity that the earliest converts to Islam were not only of upright character, but his household, who intimately acquainted with his private life, could not fail otherwise to have detected those discrepancies whichever more of less exist between the profession of the hypocritical deceiver abroad and his action at home...

...The magnanimity with which Muḥammad treated people who had so long hated and rejected him is worthy of all admiration.²⁷²

Thus, Muir's evaluation of Muḥammad's sincerity was objective and in keeping with the facts of history.

Bosworth Smith (19th century)

Next, Bosworth Smith in his Mohammed and Mohammedanism, published in 1876, responds to Muḥammad as follows:

...Historically we have a remote image of Christ's life. On the other hand, as far as the Prophet Mohammed's life is concerned, we have a history...

...But in Mohammed's life everything is different here. Instead of the shadowy and the mysterious, we have history. We know as much of Mohammed as we do even of Luther and Milton...We have a Book absolutely unique in its origin, in its preservation, and in the chaos of its contents, but on the substantial authenticity of which no one has ever been able to cast a serious doubt.

There, if in any book, we have a mirror of one of the master-spirits of the world; often inartistic, but impregnated with a few grand ideas which stand out from the whole; a mind seething with the inspiration pent within it, intoxicated with God.

...He preserved to the end of his career, that modesty and simplicity of life which is the crowning beauty of his character...²⁷³

Smith, via the above paragraphs, is most generous in his response to Muḥammad. Smith's assertion that the source material relating to Muḥammad's life is superior in detail to the documentation of the life of Jesus as found in the New Testament is true. Nonetheless, Smith does not suggest that Muḥammad has superseded Jesus. Smith, however, portrays Muḥammad as one who had a significant relationship with God.

Duncan Macdonald (20th century)

The Christian scholar, Duncan Macdonald, responded to Islam via his book in 1903 entitled, The Religious Attitude and Life in Islam. Macdonald identifies Muḥammad with the kāhins or soothsayers in Arabia. According to Macdonald, Muḥammad was superior to the kāhin clan in that he, unlike the kāhins, embraced a radical monotheism. Macdonald's assessment of Muḥammad is as follows:

...Muḥammad was not in his beginnings a self-seeking, insincere impostor. He was a pathological case, his revelations came to him in trance and, like all trance mediums, he had strangely perverted ideas, but an impostor he was not. I am speaking of what he was in the beginning, what he was before temptation fell upon him.²⁷⁴

Thus, according to Macdonald, Muḥammad was at first sincere in respect of his own beliefs. But Macdonald proceeds to allege that Muḥammad was mentally disturbed, and, therefore, his message is of no value. There is, however, no evidence

to suggest that Muḥammad was a victim of any kind of mental degeneration. Moreover, Macdonald, in continuity with Muir, considers that Muḥammad fell into sin as his ministry progressed. Nevertheless, the question of Muhammad's behaviour, from the Christian perspective, does not necessarily negate the possible divine source of his inspiration. All in all, Macdonald forsakes the negative medieval responses to Muḥammad in favour of a mildly positive response, as stated above.

D.S. Margoliouth (20th century)

Another response to Muḥammad is found in the book published in 1905 and written by D.S. Margoliouth entitled, Mohammed and the Rise of Islam. In general, Margoliouth is not fundamentally sympathetic to Muḥammad or to Islam. On the other hand, Margoliouth pays a measure of tribute to Muḥammad as follows:

...beneath the mask of the enthusiast there was the soundest and sanest common-sense.²⁷⁵

However, a few pages later, Margoliouth appears to demean Muḥammad and states:

...We have already seen reason for believing that Mohammed at some time had epileptic fits.²⁷⁶

As shown earlier, there are no grounds for supposing that Muḥammad was an epileptic. It is clear that Margoliouth had nothing positive to say about Muḥammad's claim to prophethood.

W.H.T. Gairdner (20th century)

The Anglican missionary, W.H.T. Gairdner, made a particular

response to Muḥammad. It was Gairdner's aim to re-organise the Arabic Anglican Church, and to make it a spiritual home for converted Muslims. Gairdner, in The Muslim World (1919), vehemently criticised Muḥammad's sense of morality as displayed via various incidents in the Prophet's life. For one thing, commenting on the depraved behaviour of Muslim troops, Gairdner states:

...it is known that troops of the first Mohammedan saints and martyrs and commanded by Mohammed in person, committed rape on the field on at least one occasion, and under peculiarly shocking circumstances. The occasion was after the overthrow of the Banī Muṣṭaliq at the wells of Marāsi', when many of the two hundred captured women of the tribe (expressly said to be free women and not slaves, karā' in al 'Arab Halabī II 296) were raped by Mohammed's men with his full consent.²⁷⁷

It would seem then that Gairdner makes a valid point when he draws attention to the above-cited morally questionable incident in the life history of Muḥammad. Is it possible, from the Christian viewpoint, to accept the above example of immorality, and to retain belief in the divine origin of Muḥammad's call to prophethood? Gairdner, commenting on this point, states:

...if admirers of Mohammed are content to regard him historically as a great Arabian, who had a real and strange sense of prophetic call, and through this and his immense natural genius, singular gifts, and many virtues, accomplished a stupendous life-work, then we join with the admirers.²⁷⁸

Nonetheless, Gairdner goes on to contrast Muḥammad with Jesus Christ, and concludes that:

...The Mohammed of thirteen dead centuries and three hundred million living Moslems, will not fit the role in virtue of which the human race is invited to travel from Bethlehem to Mekka, from

the Mount of the Beatitudes to the Mount of
'Arafat.²⁷⁹

Thus, it is obvious that Gairdner accepts, within limits, the notion of Muḥammad's sense of prophethood. But, according to Gairdner, the morality of Jesus stands in sharp contrast to the immorality of Muḥammad. Indeed, with regard to the above-cited immoral incident, in which Muḥammad is implicated, it would seem that Gairdner makes a legitimate point.

Tor Andrae (20th century)

The Swedish bishop, Tor Andrae, in his Mohammed: The Man and his Faith (1936), presents a sensitive study of Muḥammad. Andrae, commenting on the genuineness of Muḥammad's prophethood, states:

...Mohammed regarded his call with the utmost sincerity; he felt his heart tremble before the King of the Judgement Day, and he responded to His Prophetic commission with fear and trembling...²⁸⁰

...The piety which characterizes the sincere believers of the first generation is certainly derived from the basic religious attitude of the Prophet himself.²⁸¹

The above comments portray Muḥammad in fellowship with God, and as one sincere in his claim to prophethood. Therefore, Andrae accepts the notion of Muḥammad's call to prophethood.

Hamilton A.R. Gibb (20th century)

Another Christian response to Muḥammad comes from the pen of Sir Hamilton Gibb via his Mohammedanism, first published in 1949. Gibb attempts to assess the influence of environment and human limitations on Muḥammad's creative personality.

Thus, Gibb states:

...Mohammed suffered, on the one hand, like every other creative personality, the constraints of external circumstances, and on the other he broke a new channel through the ideas and conventions of his time and place...

The one certain fact is that his impulse was religious through and through. From the beginning of his career as a preacher his outlook and his judgement of persons and events were dominated by his conceptions of God's Government and purposes in the world of men...²⁸²

Gibb tries to see Muḥammad within the context of his environment and human limitations. He appears to acknowledge that Muḥammad was inspired by God, and that his moral standards were, at least in part, in keeping with his claim to religious ultimacy.

William Montgomery Watt (20th century)

One of the most prominent Christian responses to Muḥammad comes from William Montgomery Watt. Watt is an Anglican priest, and was for many years Professor of Islamic Studies at Edinburgh University. He is the author of numerous books and articles on Islam. His masterly two volumes on Muhammad at Mecca (1953), and Muhammad at Medina (1956) are respected by both Christians and Muslims. Watt condensed these two volumes into a single volume, Muhammad, Prophet and Statesman (1960). Responding to the question of Muḥammad's personality and achievements, Watt states:

...First there is Muḥammad's gift as a seer. Through him - or, on the orthodox Muslim view, through the revelations made to him - the Arab world was given a framework of ideas within which the resolution of its social tensions became possible...

...Secondly, there is Muḥammad's wisdom as a statesman. His wisdom in these matters is shown by the rapid expansion of his small state to a world-empire after his death, and by the adaptation of his social institutions to many different environments and their continuance for thirteen centuries.

...Thirdly, there is his skill and tact as an administrator and his wisdom in the choice of men to whom to delegate administrative details. Sound institutions and a sound policy will not go far if the execution of affairs is faulty and fumbling. When Muḥammad died, the state he had founded was a 'going concern', able to withstand the shock of his removal and, once it recovered from this shock, to expand at prodigious speed.²⁸³

The above paragraphs are positive in their historical evaluation of Muḥammad, but there is little with regard to Muḥammad in Christian theological perspective. As to the question of the legitimacy of Muḥammad's prophethood, Watt appears to have no definite answer. He tentatively concludes that Muḥammad had some association with God, and that many human-beings have now a better religion because of his ministry. Accordingly, Watt states:

...Not all the ideas he proclaimed are true and sound, but by God's grace he has been enabled to provide millions of men with a better religion than they had before they testified that there is no god but God and that Muḥammad is the messenger of God.²⁸⁴

In a more recent work, Islam and Christianity Today (1983), Watt addresses himself more directly to the question of Muḥammad in Christian theological perspective. For instance, Watt contrasts the notion of Muḥammad's prophethood with the Quranic portrayal of Jesus as something more than a prophet. Watt states:

...what have Christians to say about the prophethood of Muḥammad? For Muslims, of course, Jesus is a prophet, and indeed something more

than a prophet, since the Qur'ān (4:171) speaks of him as 'God's word which he put into Mary and a spirit from him'. For Christians the question of Muḥammad's prophethood is more difficult, especially with the continuing influence in some minds of the medieval caricatures...

Muhammad claimed to receive messages from God and conveyed these to his contemporaries. On the basis of these messages a religious community developed...

The quality of life in this community has been on the whole satisfactory for the members. Many men and women in this community have attained to saintliness of life, and countless ordinary people have been enabled to live decent and moderately happy lives in different circumstances. These points lead to the conclusion that the view of reality presented in the Qur'ān is true and from God, and that therefore Muḥammad is a genuine prophet.²⁸⁵

Therefore, for Watt, Muḥammad's claim to prophethood is legitimate, as deemed by the above criteria. However, Watt tends to intimate, in continuity with the Qur'ān, that the concept of prophethood is inadequate to describe the ministry and work of Jesus. Watt reminds his readers of the Christian understanding of Jesus which goes beyond the category of prophet.

Kenneth Cragg (20th century)

Watt's contemporary, Kenneth Cragg, is also a distinguished figure in the arena of Christian-Muslim encounters. Cragg served as assistant Anglican bishop in Jerusalem, and is a respected university lecturer. In his book The Call of the Minaret (1956), Cragg makes a positive and sensitive Christian response to Muḥammad. After considering the various Christian beliefs which may have influenced Muḥammad, Cragg concludes:

...It was not, by and large, a Christianity calculated to present Muḥammad with a fully authentic picture of Christ and the Church...But it gave to Muḥammad, under what precise circumstances may never be known, the most fundamental concepts in his vocation and in subsequent Islam: a sure monotheism and a prophetic mission in which a divine relationship of revelation, through scriptures, created a community of faith.²⁸⁶

Cragg, via the above remarks, seems to accept Muḥammad's prophethood, the Qur'ān, and the Islamic community as all having divine legitimacy. Cragg, however, goes on to ask the question:

...What is the final relationship of the messenger of God to those to whom he is sent when they refuse to hear?²⁸⁷

In answering this question, Cragg draws attention to the dilemma which Muḥammad faced at Medina when he decided to reject the way of suffering; and the dilemma which Jesus encountered in the Garden of Gethsemane which resulted in the decision for the Cross. Accordingly, Cragg states:

...The Muhammadan decision here is formative of all else in Islam. It was a decision for community, for resistance, for external victory, for pacification and rule. The decision for the Cross - no less conscious, no less formative, no less inclusive - was the contrary decision.²⁸⁸

What may be significant then is that Cragg portrays both Christianity and Islam as having evoked the same response to their respective divine theologies, but this response was handled in different ways. That is, Jesus and Muḥammad were both messengers of God. But each reacted within the limits of his understanding of divine guidance at the times in question which resulted in two contrasting responses to opposition.

Another of Cragg's books is, Muhammad and the Christian: A Question of Response (1984), in which he continues his response to Muḥammad. Cragg, in his historical analysis of Muḥammad's life, considers that Muḥammad's harsh treatment of the Banū Nadīr, the Qaynuqā' and the Qurayzah raises serious questions about his claim to religious ultimacy. Referring to the moral problem created by the incidents in question, Cragg states:

...the more urgent becomes the problem involved in the fact that here is a claim to religious ultimacy situated so starkly in a context that denies it, indeed utterly disfigures it.²⁸⁹

Cragg's unease with Muḥammad's treatment of the above-mentioned tribes is fully justified. The way of violence espoused by Muḥammad cannot be easily reconciled with the way of the Cross. However, as stated earlier, the choices favoured by Muḥammad with regard to meeting opposition do not necessarily negate any notion of Muḥammad as the recipient of a divine revelation. Muḥammad presumably followed what he considered to be the divine way in each particular historical situation. Cragg follows this line of thought and argues that Christians must recognise the 'divine cause'²⁹⁰ within the message conveyed by Muḥammad because:

...Only the worth of the prophetic experience which leads into the suffering warrants us in questioning the shape of Muḥammad's reaction to it.²⁹¹

It would seem then that Cragg is content to accept the notion of divine guidance as a common factor in the experience of Jesus and Muḥammad.

But, all of this having been said, Cragg goes on to suggest the reason for Muḥammad's recourse to power as follows:

...The whole logic of Muḥammad's career is that

the verbal deliverance of prophetic truth fails of satisfaction and must therefore pass to the post-Hijrah invocation of power.²⁹²

Yet, for Cragg, this recourse to power is not 'the only mood of divine relationship with mankind'²⁹³, and Christians can complement the Muslim conception of God with 'initiatives which bring God into the paths of His creation as man's devising has wronged it'.²⁹⁴ All in all, Cragg's above response to Muḥammad is very positive and executed with great sensitivity towards Christians and Muslims. One of the reasons why Cragg's work is so important is because it recognises Muḥammad as a divinely inspired prophet who opted for the legitimate rôle of the power-structure, as opposed to the way of suffering, to establish the Islamic ideal. That is to say, Muḥammad and Islam may be seen, from the Christian perspective, as representing an alternate truth claim in respect of the divine will for mankind. But the notion of the pathos of God, inherent in Christianity, provides another dimension to the Christian-Muslim encounter.

Another relevant book by Cragg is entitled, The Christ and the Faiths: Theology in Cross-Reference (1986). In this book, Cragg suggests that there is a definite parallel between the pre-Hijrah Muḥammad and the pre-Gethsemane Jesus, prior to their respective responses to the unyielding hostility of the world. Thus, Cragg states:

...The political decision, by which Islam lives and to which the Prophet came, carries within itself the counter-relevance of the other decision by which Jesus defined and achieved Messiahship. Christian theology is, therefore, not on alien ground in the territory of Muḥammad's Mecca: it occupies it in the contrasted idiom of Jesus.²⁹⁵

Cragg next explores the notion of the rôle of experience within prophethood as found in the Confessions of Jeremiah.²⁹⁶ In other words, not only does Jeremiah proclaim

the 'message of the Lord', but, like the people who heard it, he struggles against it. Indeed, he complains about his lot and undergoes the trials of faith, doubt, rebellion, and despair. Cragg, commenting on the significance of Jeremiah's Confessions, states:

...The prophethood has become the personality, in the sense that the final significance is carried by a figure in a setting, not essentially by a verbalism in a mouthpiece.²⁹⁷

From the Christian perspective, the above sentiments point towards the New Testament portrayal of Jesus.²⁹⁸ As a matter of fact, Cragg contends that the rôle of experience within prophethood is also evident in the life of Muḥammad. First of all, Cragg claims that Muḥammad's experience of adversity to his message sharpened its content and significance. According to Cragg, Muslims should recognise the link between God's messenger and God's message and, in so doing, 'it may serve to pave a way into an interpretation of what Christians mean by Jesus as the incarnate Word'.²⁹⁹ Needless to say, Cragg is aware of Muslim anathema at any hint of association between the divine and the human as suggested via the above comments. Nonetheless, Cragg develops his thinking on this point as follows:

...But before we hasten to exclude it, let us be aware that, in doing so, we will endanger the whole reality of that divine stake in mankind and thereby make incredible the entire phenomenon of prophethood, the Quranic included. To assume divine indifference here is to make fools of prophets and of creation a fraud...There can be no question about the divine involvement with the human world. The only question will be, How? and, How far?³⁰⁰

The next point to be noted is that Cragg, mindful of the divine involvement with both Jesus and Muḥammad, concludes:

...But there was a total contrast between them,

in how the precipitating prophetic zeal was fulfilled and how the resistant zeal of recalcitrant society was answered.³⁰¹

Further, Cragg seems to suggest that the said contrast may be indicative of the superiority of Jesus over Muhammad. That is, Cragg thinks of the sustained opposition evoked by Jesus and Muhammad, and their contrasting responses to the same, as representing a turning point in their respective ministries. In short, Cragg appears to favour Jesus' response to opposition as representing the way of truth. In this regard, Cragg states:

...Reading by the mind of Jesus we have to say that coercion, on the truth's part via the messenger, will join the issue, inevitably, on other terms than those of truth alone. Factors of prudence, security, contention, will now confound the stakes, muddy the waters, confuse the parties: they may even vindicate the original rejection as validly a self-defence after threat. They may well entrench it more sharply. They will certainly sully the original theme. Even if a forcible engagement of the message with the antagonism is physically successful, the victory will not be truth's alone, perhaps not truth's at all.³⁰²

The above remarks, by implication, tend to question Muhammad's motives with regard to his actions in order to advance Islam. Kerr, commenting on Cragg's writings, considers that 'here we encounter an equivocality typical of Christian thought in the twentieth century'.³⁰³ One cannot be absolutely sure as to what Cragg intends by certain phrases. Still, it is reasonably clear the Cragg's above comments could be interpreted as lending support to the Christian belief that Jesus, via his passive response to opposition, achieved, through suffering, the true experience of prophethood continued into sonship with the cross and resurrection. In any case, Cragg's response to Muhammad is extremely positive and constructive.

Hendrik Kraemer (20th century)

The next Christian response to Muḥammad comes from the Dutch Protestant missiologist, Hendrik Kraemer. Kraemer did much to influence missionary thinking via his book, The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World (1938). Kraemer, like Cragg, presents Muḥammad's response to human opposition as constituting a problem for Christian theology. Thus, Kraemer states:

...Islam is radically theocentric and therefore proclaims in the clearest possible way its prophetic origin...Muḥammad was possessed by two great religious aims - to proclaim God as the sole, almighty God, the Creator and the King of the Day of Judgement; to found a community, in Arabic called 'umma', ruled by the Law of God and His Apostle. These objects constitute the core of Islam, its strength and its weakness.³⁰⁴

Consequently, Kraemer was impressed by Islam's theocentricity. On the other hand, he considered that Muḥammad had become obsessed by the notion of the ummah in Medina which, according to Kraemer, resulted in:

...the externalisation and fossilisation of revelation in Islam which seems to us to be one of the great marks of its religious superficiality.³⁰⁵

The above comments are slightly harsh. But they do express a valid point, namely, that Muḥammad's preoccupation with the affairs of the ummah in Medina dictated the future course of Islam in contrast to Jesus' decision in Gethsemane which resulted, from the human perspective, in defeat. Thus, Kraemer, quoting Pascal, states:

...Muḥammad chose the way of human success, Jesus Christ that of human defeat.³⁰⁶

Maurice Borrmans (20th century)

Maurice Borrmans, a distinguished Catholic priest and theologian, outlines in his book Orientations pour un Dialogue entre Chrétiens et Musulmans (1981), the response of the Vatican Secretariat for Non-Christians to Muḥammad. This response is conciliatory to the Muslim perspective in that Christians are encouraged to forsake the polemical tradition and endeavour to:

...discern in faith Muḥammad's inspiration, sincerity and fidelity in the context of his personal response to the commands of God and, more widely, in that of a providential history of the world.³⁰⁷

Borrmans admits that some Christians are very positive in their response to Muḥammad because they see in him:

...a great religious, political and literary genius, and that particular graces were not lacking in him for multitudes to be led to the worship of the true God.³⁰⁸

Borrmans, however, qualifies the above sentence by suggesting that the said graces may have been paralleled by 'erreurs invincibles'.³⁰⁹ Further, Borrmans claims that Muḥammad followed the example of the Hebrew prophets without any real knowledge of God.³¹⁰ Hence, it is clear that Borrmans was quick to encourage Christians to foster good relations with Muslims. Yet, he was superficial in his treatment of the significance of Muḥammad's prophethood for Christians.

George Khodre (20th century)

George Khodre, the Orthodox Bishop of Mount Lebanon, wrote an intriguing article on Muḥammad and Islam entitled 'Christianity in a pluralistic world - the economy of the

Holy Spirit' (1971). Khodre considers that Christian responses to Islam have been somewhat negative. Such negativeness, according to Khodre, rests on:

...an ecclesiology which is bound up with a history which has been lived through and with a definite outlook on history. It is certain that a theology of the kind maintained by St. Thomas Aquinas, which advocated the death of infidels...went hand in hand with the Crusades which consolidated the brutal separation between Christianity and Islam as well as that between the Christian West and the Christian East.³¹¹

Moreover, Khodre claims that the outcome of Christendom's armed struggle against Islam resulted in the Church assuming 'the sociological shape of Christian nations'.³¹² Consequently, from the Christian perspective, the Christian world was portrayed as the community of truth and light. Whereas, the non-Christian world was presented, by Christendom, as the realm of error and darkness. Muslims, too, divided the world into areas of dār al-Islam (the realm of Islam) and dār al-Kufr (the realm of the infidels).

Naturally, Christians and Muslims each sought to propagate their particular view of reality. Thus, theology was drawn into the arena of cultural colonialism and, according to Khodre, the institutional Church was presented as the rôle model for the world. Khodre, criticising the Church's theology of mission, states:

...Too much emphasis has been placed on the succession of salvation events, with the result that Christ appears as the end of the history of the Old Covenant and the end of human history. The eschatological dimension of the Church's faith and life thus tends to be blurred. God is indeed within history but we forget that the divine event is the unfolding of the mystery.³¹³

Khodre goes on to stress that his plea for a reinstatement of the Church's eschatological dimension is not to be confused

with the 'Graeco-Asian idea of eternally recurring cycles'.³¹⁴ On the contrary, Khodre urges the Church to portray Christ as, 'not merely chronologically but also and above all ontologically'.³¹⁵

Khodre provides one example of a Christian response to Muḥammad which was not influenced by chronological Christology. Khodre states:

...the Nestorian Church's missionary tradition, which is almost unique in its effort to nurture the spiritual development of the religion it encountered by 'improving' them from within (Buddhism in Tibet and China), while not 'alienating' them. Mission in this way spiritually adopts the whole of creation. We find within the Persian Church in Mesopotamia the boldest attempt at an approach to Islam. The prophetic character of Muhammad is defined in Nestorian texts on the basis of the specific analysis of the Muhammadan message. But there is no blurring of the centrality and ontological uniqueness of Christ Jesus.³¹⁶

Khodre's response to non-Christian religions is interesting. The notion that all things are to be recapitulated in Christ is most helpful and suggests that all systems of belief evolve and are gradually being absorbed in Christ. Thus, Khodre concludes that the Church's aim should be to awaken 'the Christ who sleeps in the night of the religions'.³¹⁷ Therefore, Khodre's response to Muḥammad, and to all non-Christian religions, is both sensitive and positive.

David Kerr (20th century)

Finally, David Kerr is worthy of consideration in respect of his Christian response to Muḥammad. Kerr, a specialist on Christian-Muslim relations, and one who played a significant part in the creation and development of the Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations in Birmingham. At present, David Kerr is teaching at Hartford Seminary in

the United States of America. Kerr, in his article entitled 'The Prophet Muḥammad in Christian Theological Perspective' (1982), provides a survey of Christian thought with regard to Muḥammad. Beginning with John of Damascus, Kerr analyses various Christian responses to Muḥammad up to, and including, twentieth-century religious thought. Kerr, in conclusion, offers his own response to Muḥammad. First of all, he considers that the Biblical notion of 'the Kingdom of God' can find an echo in the Qur'ān. Moreover, according to Kerr, divine revelation is by no means limited to any particular model, and thus the Church should:

...explore the many extra-Biblical testimonies positively and with imagination, searching them for complementary signs of the mystery of divine providence.³¹⁸

For Kerr, Muḥammad is undoubtedly one of the said signs 'in the way of the prophets'.³¹⁹

Further, Kerr contends that Christians should respect Muḥammad in the spirit of Jesus' own command:

...Let there be no limit to your salutation as your heavenly Father's goodness knows no bounds.³²⁰

Of course, Kerr is aware that such a response to Muḥammad is not a substitute for overcoming the doctrinal differences which exist between Christianity and Islam, but the response in question may at least serve as a mutual starting point for positive Christian-Muslim relations. Hence, Kerr calls upon Christians and Muslims to:

...re-live the experience of all the prophets, particularly Moses, Jesus and Muḥammad as they wrestled with the task of 'creating peace in the city' - Moses as he withdrew from the tyranny of Pharaonic Egypt in an exodus which brought the Children of Israel to the land of Canaan and

eventually Jerusalem; Jesus as, entering upon the climax of his ministry, he drew near and saw the city and wept over it, saying: 'Would that even today you knew the things that make for peace'; and Muḥammad as he made his hijra (migration) to Medina in his search for the 'umma muslima.³²¹

Perhaps the Christian-Muslim encounter is best served via the search for a common ethical base. In any case, there is little to be gained in the arena of Christian-Muslim relations by direct doctrinal confrontation. Kerr, in his more recent article entitled 'The Prophet Muḥammad: Toward a Christian Assessment' (1987), sensitively reviews Muḥammad's ministry. At the outset, Kerr portrays Muḥammad as a man of 'utter spiritual and moral seriousness',³²² who re-stated the religion of Abraham. Moreover, Kerr sees the notion of community as a common factor and goal within Christianity and Islam. Thus, Kerr states:

...The affinity between Biblical and Quranic concerns for peace offers us a firm basis for Christian ethical interest in Muḥammad's ministry as part of our dialogue with Islam, the latter no longer to be regarded as 'post-Christian' or necessarily 'anti-Christian', but rather as sharing with Christianity in the common ethical concern for peace in community.³²³

Also, Kerr compares Muḥammad and the hijrah with Moses and the Exodus. Indeed, Kerr acknowledges Muḥammad's achievements with regard to the broken society of Medina being stabilised by Muslim rule, and the peaceful conquest of Mecca. Even the vexed question of Muḥammad's harsh treatment of the Jewish tribes is portrayed by Kerr, as stated in the first chapter of this thesis, in a conciliatory light. In addition, Kerr goes on to criticise the traditional Christian condemnation of Muḥammad's various marriages and questionable morality. Accordingly, Kerr states:

...There is not a shred of evidence for this

accusation if the classical Islamic sources are intelligently read. Muḥammad's affection for his first wife, Khadījah, was deep and lasting, and he took no other wife while she lived. His later marriages were carefully considered and ethically contracted in the spirit of the Quranic verse which declares that 'We (God) send apostles before thee, and appointed for them wives and children' (13, v. 38).³²⁴

In bringing this section to a close, it is obvious that Kerr is very objective and positive in his response to Muḥammad. He does not attempt to present a detailed Christian theological assessment of Muḥammad, but he accepts the words of the late Patriarch Timothy (8th century) that Muḥammad 'walked in the path of the prophets'.³²⁵

Therefore in conclusion, it may be said that from the fifteenth century Christian responses to Muḥammad were becoming much more objective and positive. Some Christians, in reaction to the expansion of the Ottoman empire, were content to rehearse negative Christian polemic against Muḥammad. Nonetheless, with the advent of the modern era, Christian writers sought to reverse the absurd medieval picture of Muḥammad and of Islam. That is to say, more and more Christians accepted the divine legitimacy of Muḥammad's call to prophethood. Yet, for some Christian scholars, Jesus' willingness to passively accept, via faith in God, the consequences of his ministry in contrast to Muḥammad's use of the power-structure, is indicative of another dimension to prophethood which can find no definite echo within Islam.

CHAPTER THREE

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SCRIPTURES

Section 3.1: The Integrity of the Bible according to the Qur'ān and the Hadīth

Muhammad's clash with the Jews shortly after his arrival in Yathrib (now Medina), led to the Muslim accusation that the Jews had falsified their scriptures. In 632 Muhammad, some months before his death, encountered a delegation of Christians from Najrān (Yemen), and it became obvious that Christian teachings are not compatible with Islam. Consequently, a new vision emerged which proclaimed Islam as the only religion accepted by God, because all other revealed religions have gone astray and distorted their scriptures. Early Muslim scholars, like the caliph al-Mahdī (c.781)¹, voiced the accusation, which developed over the centuries, that the People of the Book (i.e. Jews and Christians) corrupted or altered their scriptures and, thereby, the real Law (tawrat) and Gospel (injīl) imparted to mankind, via Moses and Jesus respectively, have been lost. Watt, commenting on the development of the Muslim doctrine of corruption, states:

...Eventually there were two main forms of the doctrine of corruption. Some scholars maintained that there had been a wholesale corruption of the text, a view that was expounded and defended at length by Ibn Ḥazm (d. 1064). Other scholars, however, took a milder view and held that it was not the text but only the interpretation that had been corrupted. This was apparently the view adopted in the 'Refutation of the Christians' by al-Qāsim ibn Ibrāhīm (d.860). There were also some intermediate views. This lack of agreement on what precisely was meant by corruption did not matter. It was sufficient to be able to say to a Christian 'your scripture is corrupt' and that parried any argument.²

Therefore, any Christian doctrines derived from the Bible are dismissed by Muslims as being based on corruption or alteration (tahrīf)³ of either the Biblical text or the interpretation of the same. However, is there any Quranic evidence to substantiate the said Muslim accusations?

Firstly, according to the Qur'ān, Abraham and Moses both received the earliest written revelations:

...And this is in the Books of the earliest revelations. The Books of Abraham and Moses.⁴

...Nay, is he not acquainted with what is in the books of Moses. And of Abraham who fulfilled his engagements.⁵

The above verses appear to be the only two direct references in the Qur'ān to Abraham as recipient of a written revelation. On the other hand, the Qur'ān has numerous references to Moses and the Law (tawrat) which he received.⁶ Moreover, according to the Qur'ān, David received the Psalms (zabūr)⁷, and Jesus received the Gospel (injīl).⁸

The next point to be noted is that the Quranic revelation is deemed to be contained within the earlier scriptures.⁹ Additionally, the Qur'ān considers that previous revelations emanated from God via the prophets of old¹⁰; and the true believer finds his representation in the Law (tawrat) and the Gospel (injīl).¹¹ Even a casual reading of the Qur'ān shows the Quranic portrayal of the excellencies of other scriptures. For instance, the Law (tawrat) is referred to as 'God's Book'¹² and as 'the Word of God'.¹³ It is described as 'a guide'¹⁴ and 'a mercy'.¹⁵ Further, the Qur'ān portrays the scripture imparted to Moses as the criterion (furqan) for judgement.¹⁶

The Qur'ān also provides support to the notion of the universal significance of other scriptures. That is, the

revelation given to Moses is not only for the Hebrew people, but for all mankind.¹⁷

According to the Qur'ān, the Gospel (injīl), in addition to the Law (tawrat), possesses a universal significance as 'a guide to mankind'.¹⁸ Further, the Qur'ān appears to assert that later revelation confirms previous revelation. For example, the Gospel (injīl) confirms the Law (tawrat):

...And remember, Jesus, the son of Mary, said: 'O Children of Israel! I am the messenger of God sent to you, confirming the Law which came before me...'¹⁹

Likewise, the Qur'ān claims to be the confirmation of the Mosaic revelation:

...They said, 'O our people! We have heard a Book revealed after Moses, confirming what came before it; it guides men to the truth and to a straight path'.²⁰

What may be significant then is that the Quranic confirmation of other scriptures assumes that these scriptures are extant and in the care of the People of the Book. Accordingly, the Qur'ān states:

...O Children of Israel! Call to mind the special favour which I bestowed upon you, and fulfil your covenant with Me as I fulfil My covenant with you, and fear none but Me. And believe in what I reveal confirming the revelation which is with you, and be not the first to reject faith therein, nor sell My signs for a small price; and fear Me, and Me alone.²¹

From the above verse it is clear that the Qur'ān portrays the People of the Book as being in possession of the previous scriptures which were imparted to them. Clearly, the Qur'ān does not indicate that these scriptures have been textually corrupted.

Next, according to the Qur'ān, the inspiration (wahy)²² which prompted Muḥammad to relate the Qur'ān to mankind was the same inspiration which motivated the prophets of old. Hence, the Qur'ān states:

...Before thee, also, the messengers We sent were but men, to whom We granted inspiration. If ye realise this not, ask of those who possess the Message.²³

Moreover, the Qur'ān portrays the contemporary Jews²⁴ and Christians²⁵ as being readers of the scriptures. Muḥammad, via the Qur'ān, is urged, if in doubt, to:

...ask those who have been reading the Book from before thee. The truth hath indeed come to thee from thy Lord. So be in nowise of those in doubt.²⁶

Further, the Qur'ān warns the People of the Book to stand fast by the Law (tawrat) and the Gospel (injīl), failing which they are followers of evil. The Qur'ān states:

...Say, 'O People of the Book! Ye have no ground to stand upon unless ye stand fast by the Law, the Gospel, and all the revelation that has come to you from your Lord'. It is the revelation that cometh to thee (Muḥammad) from thy Lord, that increaseth in most of them their obstinate rebellion and blasphemy. But sorrow thou not over these people without faith.

Those who believe (in the Qur'ān), those who follow the Jewish scriptures, and the Sabians and the Christians - and who believe in God and the Last Day, and work righteousness - on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.²⁷

The above Quranic verses exhort the People of the Book, at the time of Muḥammad, to observe the scriptures in their possession. The Qur'ān would hardly advise people to adhere to their scriptures if the text of the same had been

corrupted. Moreover, the Quranic verses in question come from Qur'ān 5 which Muslim scholars consider to be one of the final revelations of the Qur'ān.²⁸

Furthermore, the Qur'ān enjoins all to believe in the previous scriptures.²⁹ The Qur'ān contends that those who disbelieve in these previous scriptures have gone badly astray:

...O ye who believe! Believe in God and His Messenger, and the scripture which He hath sent to His Messenger and the scripture which He sent to those before (him). Any who denieth God, His angels, His Books, His Messengers, and the Day of Judgement, hath gone far, far astray.³⁰

Thus, the Qur'ān advocates belief in all the scriptural writings as referred to above. If some of the said writings had been corrupted, as Muslims claim, it is strange that the Qur'ān proclaims these scriptures to be in unison with the Quranic revelation. Hence, to deny the Quranic acceptance of the Hebrew and Christian scriptures is to deny the integrity of the Qur'ān.

The next point to be noted is that for the Muslim there is a distinction between the Qur'ān and other scriptures. Yet, the Qur'ān itself seems to portray the said distinction simply in terms of the language in which it is recorded, namely, Arabic.³¹ That is, in an understandable language for a people not familiar with the language of other scriptures. Furthermore, the Qur'ān criticises the Jews, and to a lesser degree the Christians also, for their unbelief. Moreover, the Qur'ān calls upon Muḥammad to arbitrate disputes among the People of the Book.³² Yet, why this rebuke and warning? The Children of Israel are charged with unbelief in the Qur'ān which confirms the revelation they already possess. Hence, the Qur'ān states:

...And when there comes to them a Book from God, confirming what is with them - although from of old they had prayed for victory against those without Faith - when there comes to them that which they should have recognized. They refuse to believe in it but the curse of God is on those without Faith.³³

Without doubt, the above Quranic critique of the Jews pertains to the charges of unbelief, but there is no suggestion that the text of former scriptures has been corrupted.

The Qur'ān, however, levels some very serious charges against the People of the Book with regard to the scriptures themselves. The Qur'ān states:

...Can ye O ye men of Faith entertain the hope that they will believe in you? Seeing that a party of them heard the Word of God, and perverted it knowingly after they understood it. Behold! When they meet the men of Faith, they say: 'We believe', but when they meet each other in private, they say, 'Shall you tell them what God hath revealed to you, that they may engage you in argument about it before your Lord?' - Do ye not understand their aim?

Know they not that God knoweth what they conceal and what they reveal? And there are among them illiterates, who know not the Book, but see therein their own desires, and they do nothing but conjecture. Then woe to those who write the Book with their own hands, and then say, 'This is from God', to traffic with it for a miserable price! - Woe to them for what their hands do write, and for the gain they make thereby.³⁴

From the context of the above verses it is evident that the Jews are accused of corrupting or altering (tahrīf) the Word of God, probably the Law (tawrat). Moreover, the Jews in question are also accused of recording the scripture in a deceptive manner. Yet, the implication of the above accusations must be that the Jews have access to a genuine text which the Qur'ān refers to as 'the Word of God'. Still, do these accusations suggest that the Jews were actually

corrupting once and for all a genuine text? The Quranic verses under review do not lend absolute support to the Muslim contention that the text of former scriptures has been corrupted. For one thing, to insist upon a literal corruption of the genuine text is to contradict the many Quranic verses, as previously discussed, which proclaim the genuineness of the Law (tawrat). Furthermore, let us assume, for the sake of argument, that the Jews referred to in the above Quranic verses did actually corrupt their scriptures. Accordingly, is it reasonable to deduce that every Jewish community in the world joined in this corruption? Likewise, is it logical to further claim that all the Christians in the world, who also possess the Law (tawrat), joined in this corruption? Or further, assuming that an actual corruption of the manuscripts themselves took place, it is absurd to suggest that all Jewry and Christendom followed the example of a small community of Jews who first corrupted their scriptures. Moreover, we read a little later in the same sūrah (Qur'ān 2):

...The Jews say, 'The Christians have naught to stand upon'; and the Christians say, 'The Jews have naught to stand upon'. Yet they profess to study the same Book. Like unto their word is what those say who know not; but God will judge between them in their quarrel on the Day of Judgement.³⁵

...Those to whom We have sent the Book study it as it should be studied - they are the ones that believe therein - those who reject faith therein - the loss is their own.³⁶

The above verses suggest that the Jews and Christians have access to the same scriptures. Indeed, the said groups are urged to earnestly study the Book in question. Why should the Qur'ān call upon others to study a scripture that, according to Muslims, has been corrupted? Further, if 'the Book' in the above Quranic passage is the Qur'ān, would the Muslim admit the possibility of its corruption by the Jews? Surely not. In any case, the above Quranic verses contain no

obvious reference to the Gospel (injīl); nor do the said verses furnish any conclusive proof to substantiate the Muslim claim that the former scriptures have been infected with corruption.

Another relevant passage from the Qur'ān is as follows:

...God did aforetime take a covenant from the Children of Israel, and We appointed twelve captains among them...But because of their breach of their covenant, We cursed them, and made their hearts grow hard. They change the words from their right places and forget a good part of the Message that was sent them, nor wilt thou cease to find them - barring a few - ever bent on new deceits. But forgive them, and overlook their misdeeds; for God loveth those who are kind.

From those, too, who call themselves Christians, We did take a covenant, but they forgot a good part of the Message that was sent them; so We estranged them, with enmity and hatred between the one and the other, to the Day of Judgement. And soon will God show them what it is they have done.

O People of the Book! There hath come to you Our Messenger, revealing to you much that ye used to hide in the Books, and passing over much that is now unnecessary. There hath come to you from God a new light and a perspicuous Book.³⁷

Once again, the Qur'ān accuses the Jews of changing words from their scriptures and forgetting a portion of the revelation they had received. Yet, the above Quranic verses, like the previous passage (Qur'ān 2: 75-79), assumes that the Jews are familiar with a genuine text. Thus, it may be argued that the so-called corruption of the text should be understood as being a verbal corruption. That is to say, the Jews in question corrupted the genuine text via verbal abuse only. Further, it appears from the above verses that some of the Jews are considered innocent. That is, they adhered to the genuine text and did not engage in a word of mouth corruption of the text. This theory of verbal corruption

gains support in a later verse from Qur'ān 5 as follows:

...But why do they come to thee (Muḥammad) for decision, when they have their own Law before them? Therein is the plain command of God; yet even after that, they would turn away. For they are not really people of Faith.³⁸

Moreover, as stated earlier, the Qur'ān considers that the Christians 'forgot a good part of the Message that was sent them'. In the passage under review (Qur'ān 5: 12-15) there is no suggestion that the Christians corrupted the Gospel (injīl), the Law (tawrat), or any scriptures in their possession. Indeed, the Muslim contention with regard to the corruption of previous scriptures, Jewish and Christian, assumes a transpositional corruption between the Jews and Christians. Even if some of the Jews of Medina were guilty of corrupting the actual text of their scriptures, it is absurd to claim that all Jewry and Christendom followed the lead of the Medinan Jews.

The following passage from the Qur'ān is also pertinent to the subject matter under discussion:

...O Messenger! Let not those grieve thee, who race each other into unbelief. Whether it be among those who say 'We believe' with their lips but whose hearts have no faith; or it be among the Jews - men who will listen to any lie - will listen even to others who have never so much as come to thee. They change the words from their right times and places. They say, 'If ye are given this, take it, but if not, beware!' If anyone's trial is intended by God, thou hast no authority in the least for him against God. For such - it is not God's will to purify their hearts. For them there is disgrace in this world, and in the Hereafter a heavy punishment.³⁹

The above Quranic verse appears to accuse the Jews of changing the words of the revelation which Muḥammad received. If this is so, the Muslim would not accept that the actual

text of the Qur'ān had been corrupted once and for all. On the contrary, if the accusation in question is accepted as relating to the Qur'ān, it must be a charge of verbal corruption which had no bearing on the Quranic text. Again, the notion of verbal corruption is in keeping with the nature of the charges in the preceding two Quranic passages, already discussed, in respect of the alleged corruption of previous scriptures.

Next, the following Quranic verses maintain the charge of corruption with regard to the Jews and their scriptures:

...Hast thou not turned thy vision to those who were given a portion of the Book? They traffic in error, and wish that ye should lose the right path. But God hath full knowledge of your enemies. God is enough for a Protector, and God is enough for a Helper.

Of the Jews there are those who displace words from their right places, and say: 'We hear and we disobey'; and 'Hear, may you not Hear'; and 'Rā'inā'; with a twist of their tongues and a slander to Faith. If only they had said: 'We hear and we obey'; and 'Do hear'; and 'Do look at us'. It would have been better for them, and more proper; but God hath cursed them for their unbelief; and but few of them will believe.

O ye People of the Book! Believe in what We have now revealed, confirming what was already with you, before We change the face and fame of some of you beyond all recognition, and turn them hindwards, or curse them as We cursed the Sabbath-breakers, for the decision of God must be carried out.⁴⁰

From this passage it would appear that the Jews are accused of changing and verbally distorting their scriptures. However, such alleged changes and distortions, according to the classical Quranic commentaries⁴¹, are not applicable to the Jewish scriptures, but are in reality examples of Jewish polemic against Muhammad. That is, Jewish attempts to ridicule Muhammad and some of his words. But, all of this having been said, even if the Quranic charges in question are

applicable to the Jewish scriptures, it is impossible to deduce from these charges that the said scriptures were altered once and for all time. Also, there is no Quranic evidence to imply that the Christians are guilty of altering words from their scriptures.

Furthermore, the Jews are specifically charged by the Qur'ān for verbally distorting the scripture with their tongues. Thus, the Qur'ān states:

...There is among them a section who distort the Book with their tongues. As they read you would think it is a part of the Book, but it is no part of the Book; and they say, 'That is from God', but it is not from God. It is they who tell a lie against God, and well they know it!⁴²

It would seem then that the Jews verbally rehearsed bogus scriptures which had no connection with the Law (tawrat). The above Quranic verse also portrays the Jews as consciously distorting their scriptures via verbal corruption of the same. Indeed, such an accusation, as charged by the Qur'ān, implies that the Jews in question have the genuine scriptures in their possession. Otherwise, how can they be condemned for distorting them? The Children of Israel are further Quranically accused of changing their scriptures as follows:

...But the transgressors changed the word from that which had been given them; so We sent on the transgressors a plague from heaven, for that they infringed our command repeatedly.⁴³

...But the transgressors among them changed the word from that which had been given them so We sent on them a plague from heaven. For that they repeatedly transgressed.⁴⁴

...Ask the Children of Israel how many clear signs We have sent them. But if anyone, after God's favour has come to him, substitutes something else, God is strict in punishment.⁴⁵

The first and second of the above verses do not appear to contain any clear reference to the Law (tawrat). Moreover, assuming that the third verse does refer to the Law (tawrat), in the light of the context and the comments which have preceded, there is no absolute proof within this verse to conclude that the text of the Law (tawrat) has been corrupted.

There are, however, some Quranic verses which imply that the People of the Book hide or misuse the Truth which God imparts to them. The Qur'ān states:

...And when there came to them a Messenger from God, confirming what was with them, a party of the People of the Book threw away the Book of God behind their backs. As if it had been something they did not know.⁴⁶

...Or do ye say that Abraham, Isma'il, Isaac, Jacob and the Tribes were Jews or Christians? Say: Do ye know better than God? Ah! Who is more unjust than those who conceal the testimony they have from God? But God is not unmindful of what ye do!⁴⁷

...The People of the Book know this as they know their own sons; but some of them conceal the truth which they themselves know.⁴⁸

...Those who conceal the clear signs We have sent down, and the Guidance, after We have made it clear for the people in the Book - on them shall be God's curse, and the curse of those entitled to curse.⁴⁹

...Those who conceal God's revelations in the Book, and purchase for them a miserable profit - they swallow into themselves naught but fire; God will not address them on the Day of Resurrection, nor purify them. Grievous will be their penalty.⁵⁰

...Ye People of the Book! Why reject ye the signs of God, of which ye are yourselves witnesses? Ye People of the Book! Why do ye clothe truth with falsehood, and conceal the Truth, while ye have knowledge?⁵¹

...And remember God took a covenant from the People of the Book, to make it known and clear to mankind, and not to hide it; but they threw it away behind their backs, and purchased with it some miserable gain! And vile was the bargain they made!⁵²

...No just estimate of God do they make when they say: 'Nothing doth God send down to man by way of revelation'. Say, 'Who then sent down the Book which Moses brought? - A light and guidance to man. But ye make it into separate sheets for show, while ye conceal much of its contents. Therein were ye taught that which ye knew not - neither ye nor your fathers'. Say, 'God sent it down'. Then leave them to plunge in vain discourse and trifling!⁵³

The above verses refer, in general, to the Jews, though a few, in all probability, also refer to the Christians. In any case, the verses under review carry severe criticisms against the People of the Book, but the said verses contain no clear proof that the previous scriptures have been corrupted. On the contrary, the verses in question tend to presume that the genuine scriptures are in the custody of the People of the Book. Otherwise, how could the People of the Book be Quranically chastised for hiding and misusing the genuine scriptures if they did not have access to the same? Further, as stated above, the Qur'ān portrays the Jews as showing parts of the actual 'Book which Moses brought', though they conceal much of it. There is, however, no suggestion that these Jews corrupted the text of the genuine scriptures.

Next, Muslim scholars⁵⁴ employ Qur'ān (7: 157) and Qur'ān 61:6 to demonstrate, from their perspective, that the Law (tawrat) and the Gospel (injīl) both contain prophecies in respect of the advent of Muḥammad as the messenger of God. Accordingly, the Qur'ān states:

...Those who follow the Messenger, the unlettered Prophet, whom they find mentioned in their own

Scriptures - in the Law and the Gospel - for he commands them what is just and forbids them what is evil...⁵⁵

...And remember, Jesus, The son of Mary, said: 'O Children of Israel! I am the messenger of God sent to you, confirming the Law which came before me, and giving glad tidings of a Messenger to come after me, whose name shall be Ahmad'. But when he came to them with clear signs, they said, 'This is evident sorcery!'⁵⁶

Muslim scholars continue to seek to establish Biblical prophecies relevant to the above-cited passages. These alleged prophecies shall be examined critically in the next section of this present chapter. At present, it is enough to note that the above Quranic verses serve as a reminder to Muslims that, even from their perspective, the entire Bible has not been corrupted. The Quranic appeal to the earlier scriptures in respect of Muḥammad demonstrates the integrity of the custodians, Jews and Christians, of these earlier scriptures. That is to say, if the Jews and Christians were opposed to Muḥammad would they not have been tempted to delete the Biblical prophecies which, according to Muslims, relate to the advent of the Prophet of Islam? It would seem then that the Quranic verses under review provide additional evidence in order to confirm the validity of the Law (tawrat) and the Gospel (injīl) at the time of Muḥammad.

To sum up this first section of our enquiry it is clear from the preceding paragraphs that the Qur'ān holds the earlier scriptures in great esteem. Time after time the Qur'ān acknowledges the existence and value of these earlier scriptures. Without doubt, there are several Quranic references which accuse the Jews of Medina, Muḥammad's contemporaries, of changing their scriptures, and these changes may refer to the actual text itself. Nonetheless, it by no means follows that the said changes refer to written corruptions. It is quite possible that the changes in question should be understood as verbal corruptions of the

scriptural text. Sweetman, commenting on this point, states:

...The charge in the Qur'ān is of concealment rather than corruption. Misquotation and misrepresentation, however reprehensible, are not the same as corruption of the text of Scripture.⁵⁷

In any case, even if the written text has been corrupted by a party of Jews it does not follow that there was a general world-wide corruption of scriptures by Jews and Christians. In this regard, Watt states:

...the impression is given that what they were altering was only certain passages and not the complete Torah. Manuscripts of the Bible are still extant which antedate Muhammad, but there is absolutely no suggestion in the Qur'ān that the whole Bible had been corrupted at some time in the distant past, nor that there had been the collusion between Christians and Jews which would have been necessary in order to corrupt the Old Testament.⁵⁸

Moreover, the Qur'ān claims that Christians have hidden or misused their scriptures, but the Qur'ān does not accuse them of corrupting their texts. In short, there is not conclusive Quranic evidence to prove that the previous scriptures have been corrupted once and for all.

Furthermore, some Muslim scholars in the past and present have acknowledged the integrity of the Biblical texts. For example, the Egyptian scholar, Muhammad 'Abduh, states:

...the charge of corruption of the Biblical texts makes no sense at all. It would not have been possible for Jews and Christians everywhere to agree on changing the text.⁵⁹

Further, in respect of the four accounts of the Gospel as presented via the New Testament, Muhammad 'Abduh remarks, 'We believe that these Gospel accounts are the true Gospel'.⁶⁰

Similarly, the purity of the Law (tawrat) and the Gospel (injīl) is defended by Yūsaf Jalil as follows:

...Some Muslims imagine that the Injīl is corrupted. But as far as corruption is concerned, not even one among all the verses of the Qur'ān mentions that the Injīl or the Tawrat is corrupted. In the concerned passages it is written that the Jews - yes the Jews, not the Christians - alter the meaning of the passages from the Tawrat while they are explaining them. At least the Christians are completely exonerated from this charge. Hence the Injīl is not corrupted and the Tawrat is not corrupted.⁶¹

Also, Mawlawi Chirag ud-Din draws support from the Qur'ān in order to express his belief in the value of the previous scriptures as follows:

...The Qur'ān commands us to believe and to honour the previous Scriptures and apostles (4: 136). When, therefore, it is commanded to believe in these Holy Scriptures, why consider the study of these Scriptures reprehensible? For when the order to believe the Qur'ān and the Holy Scriptures is one and the same, how can one conclude that reading the Qur'ān is a meritorious act, but that reading the Holy Scriptures is a punishable offence?⁶²

The above-cited Muslim responses are impartial and uphold the integrity of the Bible. They focus upon the severe consequences, even for the Qur'ān, of an un-Quranic claim that the text of the Bible has been infected with corruption. That is, the careless introduction of the notion of textual corruption of any scripture, Bible or Qur'ān, can have devastating ramifications. For example, within Islam⁶³ Shi'a Muslims claim that Sunni Muslims have corrupted the text and meaning of the Qur'ān. The basic response to either allegation is to request objective proof in order to substantiate the charge. In the case of the alleged corruption of the Bible there is no convincing Quranic proof whatsoever.

The next point to be noted is that the integrity of the Bible would appear to be confirmed by the Hadīth.⁶⁴ The Hadīth is a body of tradition which seeks to provide Muslims with guidance in respect of circumstances which are not directly provided for in the Qur'ān. Muslims claim that the Hadīth refers to an oral tradition of Muḥammad's teaching and practice; and the traditions are said to have been transmitted via a series of authorities back to the companions of Muḥammad. For instance, the following traditions are recorded in the Mishkāt al Masābīh⁶⁵ as follows:

...Jabir told how 'Umar b. al-Khattab brought God's messenger a copy of the Torah saying, 'Messenger of God, this is a copy of the Torah'. When he received no reply he began to read to the obvious displeasure of God's messenger, so Abu Bakr said, 'Confound you, do you not see how God's messenger is looking?' So 'Umar looked at God's messenger's face and said, 'I seek refuge in God from the anger of God and His messenger. We are satisfied with God as Lord, with Islam as religion, and with Muḥammad as Prophet'. Then God's messenger said, 'By Him in whose hand Muḥammad's soul is, were Moses to appear to you and you were to follow him and abandon me, you would err from the right way. Were he alive and came in touch with my prophetic mission he would follow me'. Darimi transmitted it.⁶⁶

...Salman said he read in the Torah that the blessing of food consists in ablution after it, and when he mentioned that to the Prophet he said, 'The blessing of food consists in ablution before it and ablution after it'. Tirmidhi and Abu Dawud transmitted it.⁶⁷

In the above traditions Muḥammad does not criticise the Law (tawrat), nor denies its existence. Consequently it is reasonable to assume that his silence confirms that the Law (tawrat) is extant.

Similarly, the existence of the previous scriptures is confirmed by the following Muslim tradition:

...Khaithama b. Abu Sabra said: 'I came to Medina and asked God to grant me a good companion to sit with and He granted me Abu Huraira...He then said, 'Do you not have among you Sa'd b. Malik whose prayers are answered, Ibn Mas'ud who looked after God's messenger's water for ablution and his sandals, Hudhaifa who was God's messenger's confidant, 'Ammar to whom God gave protection from the devil at the tongue of His Prophet, and Salman who was a believer in the two Books?' (meaning the Injil and the Qur'ān). Tirmidhi transmitted it.⁶⁸

The reporter of the above tradition mistakenly identifies the two Books in question as the Gospel (injīl) and the Qur'ān rather than the Law (tawrat) and the Gospel (injīl). In any event, the said tradition acknowledges the existence of the previous scriptures, especially the Gospel (injīl).

Further, the Mishkāṭ al-Maṣābīḥ contains the following relevant tradition:

...Ziyad b. Labid said: The Prophet mentioned a matter, saying, 'that will be at the time when knowledge departs'. I asked, 'How can knowledge depart when we recite the Qur'ān and teach it to our children and they will teach it to their children up till the Day of Resurrection?' He replied, 'I am astonished at you, Ziyad. I thought you were the most learned man in Medina. Do not these Jews and Christians read the Torah and the Injīl without knowing a thing about their contents?' Ahmad and Ibn Majah transmitted it, Tirmidhi transmitted something similar from him as did Darimi from Abu Umama.⁶⁹

The Hadīth portrays Jews and Christians as groups ignorant of their scriptures. Yet, from the above tradition, it is evident that Muḥammad assumes that they read the genuine Law (tawrat) and the genuine Gospel (injīl). It is possible that Muḥammad's reference to the said ignorance of these groups was directed to Arab Jews and Christians who could not understand the languages of the Law (tawrat) and the Gospel (injīl).

Next, the Mishkāt al-Masābīh contains the following traditions which portray the Law (tawrat) as prophesying the advent of Muḥammad:

...ʿAta b. Yasar told that he met ʿAbdallah b. ʿAmr b. al-ʿAs and asked him to inform him of the description of God's messenger given in the Torah. He agreed, swearing by God that he was certainly described in the Torah by part of the description of him given in the Qur'ān when it says, 'O prophet, We have sent you as a witness, a bearer of good tidings, and a warner, and a guard for the common people. You are my servant and my messenger; I have called you the one who trusts, not harsh or rough, nor loud-voiced in the streets.

He will not repulse evil with evil, but will pardon and forgive, and God will not take him till He uses him to straighten the crooked creed so that people may say there is no god but God, and opens thereby blind eyes, deaf ears and hardened hearts'. Bukhari transmitted it, and Darimi also gives something to the effect on the authority of ʿAta who gave as his authority Ibn Salam.⁷⁰

...Anas told that when a young Jew who was a servant of the Prophet became ill, he went to visit him and found his father sitting by his head reciting the Torah. God's messenger said to him, 'I adjure you, Jew, by God who sent down the Torah to Moses, do you find in the Torah any account or description of me, or anything about my coming forth?'

On his replying that he did not, the young man said, 'Certainly, messenger of God, I swear by God that we do find in the Torah an account and description of you and a statement about your coming forth, and I testify that there is no god but God, and that you are God's messenger'. The Prophet then said to his companions, 'Remove this man from beside his head and look after your brother'. Baihaqi transmitted it in *Dala'il un-Nubuwa*.⁷¹

The above two passages presume that the genuine Law (tawrat) is extant. In particular, the Law (tawrat) is recited by the father of the sick child. Certainly, none of the above

traditions claims that the text of the Law (tawrat) has been corrupted. Also, the traditions under review assert that the Law (tawrat) refers to the advent of Muḥammad, and the validity of this claim shall be examined in detail in the next section of this present chapter.

Furthermore, according to the Mishkāt al-Maṣābīḥ, Muḥammad adheres to the teaching of the Law (tawrat) as follows:

...‘Abdallah b. ‘Umar told that the Jews came to God’s messenger and mentioned to him that a man and a woman of their number had committed fornication. He asked them what they found in the Torah about stoning and they replied that they should disgrace them and that they should be beaten. ‘Abdallah b. Salam then said, ‘You lie; it contains instruction that they should be stoned to death, so bring the Torah’. They spread it out, and one of them put his hand over the verse of stoning and read what preceded it and what followed it. ‘Abdallah b. Salam told him to lift his hand and when he did so the verse of stoning was seen to be in it.

They then said, ‘He has spoken the truth, Muḥammad; the verse of stoning is in it’. The Prophet then gave command regarding them and they were stoned to death. In a version it says that he told him to lift his hand and that when he did so, the verse of stoning was clearly in it. The man then said, ‘It contains the verse of stoning, Muḥammad, but we have been concealing it from one another’. He then gave command regarding them and they were stoned to death. (Bukhari and Muslim).⁷²

It is clear from the above tradition that Muḥammad does not consider the Law (tawrat) to have been corrupted or abrogated. Indeed, the same tradition provides an instance of the Jews verbally, but not textually, hiding and altering the Law (tawrat).

There is, however, a tradition related by Bukhārī (died 870) which clearly supports the Muslim claim that the previous scriptures have been infected with corruption. The said

tradition states:

...O congregation of Muslims, how can you ask questions of the people of the book, when your book which God revealed to His prophet brings the best tidings about God? Ye read it unfalsified and God has told you that the people of the book have altered what God wrote, and have falsified the book with their hands, and said, 'This is from God' in order to get some paltry reward for it. Has He not forbidden you to ask those people about what you have received in the way of knowledge? By God, we have never seen any one of them asking you about what has been revealed to you.⁷³

Certainly, if the above tradition were the only reference to the previous scriptures in the Hadīth, it would lend support to the Muslim claim that the scriptures in question cannot be trusted. However, the above tradition stands in sharp contrast with the numerous traditions within the Hadīth all of which uphold the integrity and trustworthiness of the previous scriptures. Indeed, the said traditions portray Muḥammad as one who accepts the existence and worth of these scriptures. Nonetheless, it is conceivable, as discussed earlier, that individual Jews corrupted certain texts of their scriptures. That is, there may have been isolated occurrences of textual corruption. If so, such a fact may account for the above-cited tradition with its charge of textual corruption against the People of the Book and their scriptures. All in all, to concede that there may have been isolated instances of textual corruption helps to reconcile the single tradition under review with the numerous traditions which reject any notion of a universal corruption of all texts with all Jews and Christians.

Finally, related to the Muslim accusation that the text of the Bible has been infected with corruption is the additional Muslim claim with regard to the doctrine of abrogation. In this connection, Cragg states:

...Some differences between Islam and the Biblical faith may be explained by the former as due to abrogation. This is the doctrine that later revelation supersedes earlier revelation - a view held to obtain even within the Qur'ān itself. Some Biblical statements may be entirely free of corruption, and yet be no longer valid...It explains the Muslim confidence that the Bible has nothing to add to the Qur'ān and that the latter is sufficient without the former.⁷⁴

The following verses especially are vital to Quranic teaching about abrogation:

...None of Our revelations do We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, but We substitute something better or similar. Knowest thou not that God hath power over all things?⁷⁵

...When We substitute one revelation for another - and God knows best what He reveals in stages - they say, 'Thou art but a forger'. But most of them understand not.⁷⁶

...God doth blot out or confirm what He pleaseth. With Him is the Mother of the Book.⁷⁷

...By degrees shall We teach thee to declare the message, so thou shalt not forget. Except as God wills. For He knoweth what is manifest and what is hidden.⁷⁸

The above verses were applied by the early Muslim community to the Qur'ān itself.⁷⁹ Also, from the Christian perspective, Sweetman considers that 'the doctrine of abrogation (naskh) really applies to the Qur'ān internally'.⁸⁰ That is to say, one passage (āya) of the Qur'ān abrogates another passage (āya) of the Qur'ān. Further, the following tradition from the Mishkāt al-Masābīh, related by Daraqutni, confirms the above understanding of abrogation as follows:

...Ibn 'Umar reported God's messenger as saying: 'Some of my traditions abrogate others just as some parts of the Qur'ān abrogate others'.⁸¹

However, some Muslims⁸² of the more recent past and present reject the notion of the Qur'ān internally abrogating previous Quranic passages. Thus, they have dismissed the interpretation of the early Muslim community on this matter in favour of the claim that the doctrine of abrogation relates to the previous scriptures. Hence, according to this view, one āya of the Qur'ān cancels an āya of previous scripture, not an āya of the Qur'ān. Muslims believe that the Qur'ān is the eternal and uncreated (abadī wa ghayr makhluq) word of God which derived from the Heavenly Prototype via the angel Gabriel to Muḥammad. Sweetman, commenting on the Muslim understanding of the contents of this Heavenly Prototype, states:

...From this heavenly prototype various portions are at divers times revealed to different prophets. It is quite clear that the heavenly book is more than the Qur'ān...It was not the heavenly book itself that was sent down to Muhammad, but portions of its content in an Arabic form, and for this the word Qur'ān is used. It is for this reason that Jews and Christians can be called 'People of the Book', and for the same reason the Qur'ān is said to confirm what has gone before (sūrahs 3:75; 6:92; 35:28).⁸³

Therefore, from the Muslim perspective, it would appear that the Heavenly Prototype of the Qur'ān also contains the previous scriptures. Thus, does the doctrine of abrogation with regard to the previous scriptures apply to the heavenly original. In this connection, Sweetman states:

...if, as some later writers are fond of doing, we consider that abrogation...really refers to the abrogation of the other scriptures by the Qur'ān, then are we to assume that the abrogated and the abrogating are together in the heavenly tablet? If so, what sort of notion are we to gather as to the relation of this heavenly tablet to the will of God?

It would simply seem to be a record of the temporal changes and chances of human life as seen by divine prescience, and would attribute to the divine all the shades and fluctuations of human life with no certainty as to what is truth and ultimately no concern for it, for that which is truth for yesterday and not for to-day is not truth at all. It would have to assume that a lengthy statement of history, e.g., that Jesus died on the cross, could stand in a book written by God alongside a denial that it took place. Such ideas are the height of absurdity and make a mockery of God.⁸⁴

The above remarks serve to portray the illogical consequences of the doctrine of abrogation when it is applied to the previous scriptures. If, for the sake of argument, we accept this 'modern' application of the doctrine of abrogation, it would also relate internally to the Qur'ān. To put it another way, if the previous scriptures have been abrogated, then the Quranic passages which command the People of the Book to judge according to the Law (tawrat) and the Gospel (injīl) must also be abrogated. That is, why these Quranic commands if the previous scriptures are abrogated? All in all, the doctrine of abrogation when applied to the previous scriptures can find no support from the Qur'ān, or the Hadīth.

In bringing this section to a close it is clear that, according to the Qur'ān and the Hadīth, the previous scriptures have not been infected with corruption. Thus, Sweetman states:

...It must be said emphatically that in none of the texts of the Qur'ān do we find that the charge of the corruption of the text of the former Scriptures can be justified. Indeed, there are two pieces of evidence from the Qur'ān and the Hadīth which declare that it is impossible for such a thing to take place. Sura XVIII.26 'Recite thou what thou art inspired of with the Book of thy Lord; there is no changing His words'; and the tradition in Bukhārī reported from Ibn 'Abbās, 'There is no man who could

corrupt a single word of what proceeded from God'. Postulating therefore that the Law and the Injil proceeded from God or that they are 'His words', this would signify that God would not allow them to be altered. The God who gives the Scripture is surely able to preserve it, if everything depends on its incorrupt preservation or its inerrant text.⁸⁵

The above sentiments from the Qur'ān and the Hadīth, together with Sweetman's comments, allow for the possibility of false interpretation of the scriptures, but not for the possibility of changing the written text. In the end, when every argument has been considered and weighed, the only conclusion acceptable to the objective enquirer must be that the integrity of the Bible, as proclaimed by Christian belief⁸⁶, is upheld by the Qur'ān and the Hadīth. The historic Christian belief is that the Bible as we now have it is trustworthy. It portrays Jesus as one who chose to face the consequences of his ministry which resulted in his death and resurrection. Jesus' passive method to create peace in the city stands in sharp contrast to the example of Muḥammad and his choice to embrace the power-structure in order to establish Islam. As the Qur'ān and the Hadīth reflect not only the times of Muḥammad but also the period up to the times of the collectors of the Hadīth, this might well suggest that Muslims conscious of the discrepancies between the Bible and the Qur'ān, and motivated by the isolated Quranic references to the People of the Book misinterpreting and distorting their scriptures, developed the doctrine of textual corruption with regard to the former scriptures only some centuries after Muḥammad.

Section 3.2: Prophecies Regarding Muḥammad in the 'Unadulterated' Scriptures

Does the Bible speak of Muḥammad? Muḥammad and the early Muslims were convinced that Muḥammad's advent was clearly recorded in the Bible. As shown earlier, this belief is reflected by the Qur'ān (7:157; 61:6). The writings of Catholicos Timothy I (728 to 823) about his own encounter with the caliph al-Mahdī in (c. 781) show that the said caliph accepted Deuteronomy 18:18 as a prophecy in respect of the coming of Muḥammad.⁸⁷ Deuteronomy states:

...I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brethren; and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.⁸⁸

This passage implies that the prophetic office as held by Moses will be filled by a succession of prophets.⁸⁹ Indeed, such an understanding of prophethood is in keeping with the Quranic portrayal of Moses within the continuous line of prophets.⁹⁰ Thus, can we agree with the caliph al-Mahdī that Deuteronomy 18:18 refers to Muḥammad? Watt considers that:

...The passage in Deuteronomy 18:14-19 in which Moses says to the Israelites that God will raise up for them from among their brothers a prophet like himself seems to state a general principle, namely, that when God's people need divine guidance or other help God will send a prophet to give them that...The later Jews thought it applied to the coming of the Messiah, and it was taken in this sense by the early Christians and applied to Jesus (Acts 3:22f). From this standpoint a Christian can admit that in a sense it also applies to Muḥammad.⁹¹

In a very general sense, Watt would appear to be correct when he accepts that Deuteronomy 18:18 may be taken as a legitimate reference to the advent of Muḥammad. On the other hand, this Old Testament verse relates to prophethood

within Israel. The Jews of Medina rejected Muḥammad because, from their perspective, there could be no prophets outside of Israel. Muḥammad responded by claiming that Abraham was not a Jew, but was a believer.⁹² The Quranic appeal to Abraham in order to counteract exclusive Jewish claims about prophethood helps to establish Deuteronomy 18:18 as a prophecy about Muḥammad. This verse, however, is indicative of another dimension within prophethood as shown in the life of Moses. Thus, the Christian scholar, Gerhard von Rad, comments:

...the corpus of Deuteronomy is put into the form of words of Moses (and so not of Jahweh) spoken to Israel. This radical change in the conception of Moses was doubtless caused by the emergence of the prophetic movement. But this concentration of all Israel's communion with God upon him now had a result which Deuteronomy clearly envisaged - Moses is a suffering mediator...

After the people had sinned in the matter of the golden calf, it is Moses who tries to ward off Jahweh's anger. He lies prostrate before God forty days and forty nights, taking no food or drink: his long prayer of intercession is given word for word (Deut. 9:18ff., 25ff.)...Even the death of Moses outside the land of promise - an odd fact which later ages had to explain theologically - was vicarious for Israel.⁹³

Furthermore, von Rad goes on to link this picture of Moses with the Servant Songs as found in Isaiah.⁹⁴ It is not known whom precisely Isaiah⁹⁵ had in mind when he spoke about God's Servant, but he was convinced that he would save God's people by taking upon himself the burden of their sins, and that, by suffering on their behalf, he would enable them to receive forgiveness. Commenting on the origin of the Servant Songs, von Rad states:

...one strand of tradition which we must recognise as particularly important for the origin of these songs; this is that of Moses, especially as he is represented in Deuteronomy. Moses is there designated the Servant of God,

indeed, he stands there as the prophetic prototype...He too acts as mediator between Jahweh and Israel, he suffers, and raises his voice in complaint to Jahweh, and at the last dies vicariously for the sins of his people. 'Chastisement was laid upon him' - are not these traits which all recur in the Servant?

In my opinion, it is very probable that, as with Deuteronomy, Deutero-Isaiah stood within a tradition which looked for a prophet like Moses. Deutero-Isaiah did not draw upon Deuteronomy. It is much more likely that both used an existing Mosaic tradition, about his office as mediator, and about the prophet who was to come.⁹⁶

If Deuteronomy 18:18 is interpreted within the framework as described by von Rad, then it becomes clear that the notion of vicarious suffering was a reality in the life and ministry of Moses. Further, if the above-cited interpretation of the Servant of Yahweh as 'a prophet like Moses' is correct, this would show the importance of the concept of vicarious suffering within Old Testament theology. Needless to say, the Qur'ān utterly rejects the doctrine of vicarious suffering as follows:

...Say, 'Shall I seek for my Cherisher other than God, when He is the Cherisher of all things that exist? Every soul draws the meed of its acts on none but itself. No bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another. Your goal in the end is towards God'.⁹⁷

Consequently, it would appear that Deuteronomy 18:18 cannot be applied to Muḥammad when it is interpreted within the total context of Old Testament theology with its portrayal of vicarious atonement.

Also, the caliph al-Mahdī translated part of Isaiah 21:7 as the 'rider on a camel'⁹⁸ which he interpreted as a prophecy in respect of Muḥammad. In fact, Isaiah 21:7 states:

...When he sees riders, horsemen in pairs, riders on asses, riders on camels, let him listen

diligently, very diligently.⁹⁹

The relevant part of this verse appears to refer to 'riders on camels', not 'rider on a camel'. In any event, the verse in question belongs to a passage (Isaiah 21:1-10) which is difficult to translate and to interpret. This passage relates to a disaster which has befallen, or is about to befall, Babylon. Perhaps the most likely historical event to which this passage refers is the collapse of the Babylonian power in 539 B.C.¹⁰⁰ Even if we reject the plural 'riders on camels' and adopt the singular of the same, there is still no specific reference to the advent of Muḥammad in Isaiah 21:7. On the other hand, this verse might be interpreted, in a very general sense, as an allusion to an event in the future and to a supreme climax which, from the Muslim viewpoint, could find its fulfilment in the coming of the Prophet of Islam.

Finally, the caliph al-Mahdī¹⁰¹ believed that the promise of the Paraclete (paraklētos), as found in the Fourth Gospel, applied to the advent of Muḥammad. The relevant verses from the said Gospel portray Jesus as saying:

...And I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor (paraklētos), to be with you for ever...¹⁰²

...But the Counsellor (paraklētos), the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.¹⁰³

...But when the Counsellor (paraklētos) comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness to me.¹⁰⁴

...Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Counsellor (paraklētos) will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.¹⁰⁵

In all of the above verses the Greek word paraklētos is primarily a verbal adjective, and suggests the capability or adaptability for giving aid.¹⁰⁶ Kūmmel, commenting on the meaning of paraklētos, states:

...The common Greek usage knows only the meaning of 'proxy' or 'helper', and this meaning fits in completely with the functions of the Paraclete in the Gospel of John...If one wishes to translate the Greek word at all, one therefore will preferably choose 'helper'. Yet it is evident that even in the early church many Christians had the feeling that the word could not be reproduced by a concept in another language, and hence they contented themselves with the appropriation of the word Paraclete as a foreign word in the Latin and Syriac languages.¹⁰⁷

From the Christian perspective, as represented by the Fourth Gospel, the term paraklētos is the 'Spirit of truth', the 'Holy Spirit'. He comes from the Father in Jesus' name and dwells with the disciples. He is in fact the presence of God in Christ continuing with his faithful servants and witnesses after the ascension of Jesus, fulfilling *and* perfecting his work. Indeed, according to Sanders and Mastin, the use of the word paraklētos in the Fourth Gospel 'set the Church on the way to the formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity'.¹⁰⁸ Consequently, how could the caliph al-Mahdī, and subsequent generations of Muslims, claim that the designation paraklētos, as presented by the Fourth Gospel, applies, not to the Holy Spirit, but to Muḥammad?

Firstly, from the Quranic viewpoint¹⁰⁹, Jesus is strengthened by the Holy Spirit. Still, there is no suggestion in the Qur'ān that the Holy Spirit is God himself. On the contrary, the Qur'ān portrays the notion of the Holy Spirit as the breath or wind of God¹¹⁰, and true believers are strengthened with 'a spirit from Himself'.¹¹¹ Therefore, at the outset, the Christian interpretation of paraklētos as the Holy Spirit, and the gradual development of the doctrine of

the Trinity, can find no parallel in the Qur'ān. Hence, Muslim acceptance of the Christian understanding of paraklētos is not possible.

Furthermore, Manes (or Mani) (c. 216-277), the founder of Manichaeism¹¹², was a prophet who embraced and propagated an independent religion which included Gnostic, Buddhist and Zoroastrian elements. It appears that Manes interpreted paraklētos, not as a reference to the Holy Spirit, but as an allusion to an enlightened teacher who was to further and develop the religion revealed by Jesus.¹¹³ Indeed, Manes proclaimed himself to be the paraklētos promised by Jesus. Needless to say, Manes' interpretation of paraklētos is contrary to the New Testament portrayal of that term. However, Manichaeism provides an example, outside of Islam, of the application of paraklētos to a human being. There is no evidence to suggest that Muḥammad was familiar with Manichaeism. So how can we account for the Muslim belief that Muḥammad's advent can be derived from the term paraklētos?

In this regard, the following Quranic verse is of particular importance:

...And remember, Jesus, the son of Mary, said: 'O Children of Israel! I am the messenger of God sent to you, confirming the Law which came before me, and giving glad tidings of a Messenger to come after me, whose name shall be Ahmad' But when he came to them with Clear Signs, they said, 'This is evident sorcery!'¹¹⁴

A. Yūsuf 'Alī comments on the above verse as follows:

... 'Aḥmad' or 'Muḥammad', the Praised One, is almost a translation of the Greek word Periclytos. In the present Gospel of John 14:16; 15:26; and 16:7, the word 'Comforter' in the English version is for the Greek word 'Paracletos', which means 'Advocate', one called to the help of another, a kind of friend, rather

than 'Comforter'. Our doctors contend that Paracletos is a corrupt reading for Periclytos, and that in their original saying of Jesus there was a prophecy of our Holy Prophet Ahmad by name. Even if we read Paraclete, it would apply to the Holy Prophet, who is 'a Mercy for all creatures' - (21:107).¹¹⁵

The above remarks assume that the term Aḥmad (praised, more praised), as found in Qur'ān 61:6, is a clear reference to Muḥammad. Undoubtedly, from the second part of the eighth century the word Aḥmad has been used by Muslims as an alternative appellation for Muḥammad.¹¹⁶ However, in Qur'ān 61:6 the word Aḥmad could be understood as an adjective rather than as a proper noun and as such could describe someone other than Muḥammad. Watt, commenting on the meaning of Aḥmad, during the centuries prior to the late eighth century, remarks:

...Up to that time, however, it would appear that ahmad was regarded as an adjective meaning 'more praiseworthy', but of course still referring to Muḥammad.¹¹⁷

Additionally, the use of Aḥmad as a proper name among Muslims seems to date from 740 A.D. (125 A.H.). Thus, Watt comments:

...As soon as one starts to inquire into the use of the name 'Aḥmad' in the early centuries of Islam, a striking fact emerges. Muslim children were practically never called Aḥmad before about the year 125 A.H. Indeed, the point may be put even more strongly: it is impossible to prove that any Muslim child was called Aḥmad after the Prophet before about the year 125. On the other hand, there are many instances prior to this date of boys called Muḥammad after the Prophet; some of these had apparently received that name during the Prophet's lifetime.¹¹⁸

The above sentiments appear to suggest that the use of Aḥmad as an actual name among Muslims has a history only from 740

A.D. (125 A.H.). Watt, however, goes on to show that, during the 'Age of Ignorance' (al-jāhiliyya), at least two persons shared the name Aḥmad, namely, Aḥmad b. Ḥafṣ b. al-Mughīrah al-Makhzūmī, and Abū Aḥmad b. Jaḥsh.¹¹⁹ Nonetheless, there is no extant evidence to show that these persons were named after the Prophet of Islam.¹²⁰ On the other hand, the name Muḥammad was in common use in the 'Age of Ignorance' (al-jāhiliyya). Following the rise of Islam, and during Muḥammad's lifetime, some devout Muslims named their children after the Prophet.¹²¹ Accordingly, if the word Aḥmad had been an alternative name for Muḥammad, then one would expect to find examples of the same relating to the Prophet. Yet, there is no evidence to show that Aḥmad was used as a proper name for Muḥammad prior to 740 A.D. (125 A.H.). Thus, Watt concludes that there is:

...a strong case for holding that the name Aḥmad was not given to Muslim children as an alternative to Muḥammad until about 125 A.H.¹²²

A. Yūsuf 'Alī, as cited above, suggests that Aḥmad, or Muḥammad, is the translation of periclytos (celebrated) which has been erroneously rendered paraklētos (helper) in the Fourth Gospel. Is it possible to ascertain at what date this suggestion was first formulated and voiced? The ancient biography of Muḥammad by Ibn Ishāq (died 767 A.D.) and edited by Ibn Hishām (died 834 A.D.) is the most reliable source of the earliest traditions and offers much detail on the general history of Muḥammad. For instance, Ibn Ishāq states:

...Among the things which have reached me about what Jesus the Son of Mary stated in the Gospel which he received from God for the followers of the Gospel, in applying a term to describe the apostle of God, is the following. It is extracted from what John the Apostle set down...

'He that hateth me hath hated the Lord...But when the Comforter (Munahhemana) has come whom God will send to you from the Lord's presence, and the spirit of truth which will have gone forth

from the Lord's presence he shall bear witness of me and ye also, because ye have been with me from the beginning. I have spoken unto you about this that ye should not be in doubt'. The Munahhemana (God bless and preserve him!) in Syriac is Muhammad; in Greek he is the paraclete.¹²³

The above passage from the Sīrah does not mention the word Aḥmad. Moreover, the said passage is silent with regard to Qur'ān 61:6 and its portrayal of Jesus as one who refers to Aḥmad. Do these omissions suggest that Ibn Ishāq, and Ibn Hishām, were ignorant of the Muslim identification of Aḥmad with Muḥammad? Commenting on this question, Guthrie and Bishop state:

...The implication is that neither Ibn Hishām nor his predecessor knew anything about the surmised reading of periklutos for paraklētos, and its possible rendering as Aḥmad. Their concern was not for any similarity in name as proof of the mission foretold by Jesus. There is merely the bare statement that Munahhemana means 'Muḥammad', which is philologically out of the question.¹²⁴

Clearly, Ibn Ishāq was familiar with the term paraclete, and it may be argued that if he had known about the Muslim use of Aḥmad, as a translation of the said term, he would have mentioned this fact.

Yet, one of Ibn Ishāq's contemporaries, Mūsā b. Ya qūb az Zam 'ī (died c. 153-8 A.H.), was associated with a tradition which refers to an unknown Christian who proclaims Muḥammad to be Aḥmad as follows:

...he was a Christian of the people of Maris and used to read the Gospel; and he mentioned that the description of the Prophet (God bless and preserve him) was in the Gospel; he was of the seed of Ishmael, his name Aḥmad.¹²⁵

Hence, it may be suggested that Ibn Ishāq was aware of the application of Aḥmad to the alleged Gospel predictions in

respect of Muḥammad. If this is correct, it is possible that Ibn Ishāq omitted any reference to the term Aḥmad, not because he was unaware of its existence, but because he rejected the general Muslim interpretation of Qur'ān 61:6.¹²⁶ Moreover, Watt suggests that:

...the identification of Muḥammad with the Paraclete may be historically independent of any use of the name Aḥmad. The argument may run: Jesus foretold the coming of the Paraclete, and Paraclete and Muḥammad are the same in meaning. After all, Muḥammad is just as good a translation of periklutos as Aḥmad...

...In order to meet Christian criticisms of Islam some Muslims were looking for predictions of Muḥammad in the Christian scriptures, and noticed the passages about the Paraclete in Jn. 14-16. One of the arguments they adduced to support the identification of Muḥammad with the Paraclete was that of the similarity of meaning (which is based on the confusion of paraklētos with periklutos). When sūrah 61:6 was read with such a view in mind, the connection between Muḥammad and Aḥmad would readily be seen, even though aḥimadu at this time was normally taken as an adjective.¹²⁷

To suggest, as some Muslims do, that the word paraklētos (helper) as found in the Fourth Gospel is incorrect and should be periklutos (celebrated) is absurd. For one thing, the Greek text of the Codex Vaticanus¹²⁸ ('B') which forms part of the fourth-century manuscript of the Greek Bible has paraklētos, not periklutos, in the text of the Fourth Gospel. Further, the term periklutos was not common, and it does not appear in the whole of the New Testament. In brief, there is no sound New Testament evidence on which to base the Muslim claim with regard to periklutos. Indeed, in reference to this point, Sweetman considers 'that the Muslim interpretation is quite impossible hardly needs repetition'.¹²⁹ When Muslims substitute periklutos for paraklētos, they commit the same error that they sometimes (wrongly) accuse Christians of committing, namely, wilfully changing the text of the Gospel (injīl) and distorting its

meaning. Furthermore, as quoted above, A. Yūsuf 'Alī states, 'even if we read Paraclete, it would apply to the Holy Prophet'. If Muḥammad is the Paraclete is he then (as chapters 14 to 16 of the Fourth Gospel portray the Paraclete) the Spirit of truth (14:17), the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in Jesus' name (14:26), whom Jesus sends to His disciples from the Father and who proceeds from the Father (15:26)? None of these passages suggest that Jesus' disciples were to wait some five hundred years before the fulfilment of His promises. But even if we were to grant a long lapse of time, why should these predictions refer to Muḥammad and not to another? The New Testament Book, The Acts of the Apostles (chapter 2), presents the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost as the fulfilment of Jesus' prophecies with regard to the Paraclete.

But, all of this having been said, is there any way in which the term paraklētos, as found in the Fourth Gospel, can be understood as a prophecy in respect of the advent of Muḥammad? To answer this question we must understand how the earliest Christians employed the Old Testament in their quest to elevate Christ. Before the Christian era¹³⁰, the Rabbis had invented various methods of exegesis which attempted to show that incomprehensible passages of the Hebrew Scriptures were not intended to be taken in their literal sense and, thereby, the doctrine of the inerrancy of scripture could be maintained. The Hanson brothers, commenting on the significance of Jewish exegesis for Christianity, state:

...The writers of the New Testament adopted this, extending it as they attempted to show that many hitherto unsuspected predictions about Christ, the Church and Christian doctrine lay hidden in the Old Testament...They turned the Bible into what might without exaggeration be called a vast crossword puzzle.¹³¹

Hence, the earliest Christian interpretation of the Old Testament followed contemporary Jewish methods of exegesis;

that is to say, the Old Testament text is cited and then the interpretation added. However, according to Dunn, the New Testament reflects another type of interpretation of the Old Testament where:

...the actual quotation of the text embodies its interpretation within the quotation itself - what is perhaps therefore best described as a targumic translation or (as I prefer) a pesher quotation. The incorporation of the interpretation within the text itself sometimes leaves the text verbally unaltered, but usually it involves modifying the actual text form.¹³²

One relevant example of a pesher quotation where the meaning of the text is altered by changing the actual text form is found in the Christian interpretation of Psalm 68. First, Psalm 68:18 states:

...Thou didst ascend the high mount, leading captives in thy train, and receiving gifts among men, even among the rebellious, that the Lord God may dwell there.

In both text and interpretation this Psalm is probably the most difficult in the Psalter.¹³³ The above verse appears to echo the conquest of Canaan when God, after his victory over the Canaanite kings, transferred his residence from Sinai to the holy mount in Jerusalem. In any case, the author¹³⁴ of the letter to the Ephesians interprets Psalm 68:18 in connection with the gifts of the Spirit as follows:

...Therefore it is said, 'When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men'.¹³⁵

Rabbinic commentators¹³⁶ regularly applied these words to Moses, who ascending Mount Sinai received the law from God and then gave it as a gift to Israel. Influenced by this rabbinical interpretation the author of Ephesians changes the

original verb from 'receive' to 'give' and then applies the Psalm to Christ rather than to Moses. Clearly, the text of Psalm 68:18 has been significantly altered and re-interpreted by the Christian author in question.

Another example of pesher quotation is evident from Matthew's interpretation of Zechariah 11:13. The original verse from Zechariah 11:13 reads:

...Then the Lord said to me, 'Cast it into the treasury' - the lordly price at which I was paid off by them. So I took the thirty shekels of silver and cast them into the treasury in the house of the Lord.

This verse portrays a piece of prophetic symbolism with the prophet Zechariah as the actor. We are not told for what service the wages are paid. Possibly, before his call, the prophet had some official post in the temple. Moreover, the significance of his action is not clear, but, according to Mason:

...the word 'treasury' rests on an emendation of the Hebrew, which reads 'potter'. But the same word can also refer to a 'smith' who fashions in metal as well as clay.¹³⁷

Thus, if there was a foundry in the second temple, did Zechariah cast the thirty shekels of silver into the furnace? If so, such action was perhaps indicative of God's coming judgement in order to test the official priesthood. Anyway, just over some five centuries later Matthew (27: 9-10) interprets the said verse from Zechariah as follows:

...Then was fulfilled what had been spoken by the prophet Jeremiah, saying, 'And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him on whom a price had been set by some of the sons of Israel, and they gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord directed me'.

First, the singular 'I' of Zechariah 11:13 is changed to 'they' (priests) and 'him' (Jesus) in Matthew 27:9; but Matthew, for whatever reason, reproduces the 'me' at the end. The thirty pieces of silver represent the payment received by Judas for his part in the plot to dispose of Jesus. Likewise, the reference to the potter's field is to be equated with the priests' use of the blood money returned by Judas. Further, the Matthean use of the quotation from Zechariah 11:13 is ascribed to Jeremiah. Dunn considers that:

...This is probably because he wants to include in his quotation a reference to Jeremiah. Two famous incidents in Jeremiah's life were his encounter with the potter and his prophetic act in buying a field (Jer. 18-19, 32). So the Matthean text is properly to be regarded as a combination of texts - primarily of Zechariah, but with implicit reference to Jeremiah.¹³⁸

Thus, once again an Old Testament text has been significantly re-interpreted as a means to establish a so-called prophecy in respect of the Christ-event.

Additionally, Dunn points out that 'on a number of occasions the pesher quotation involves the development of a text which has no real parallel'.¹³⁹ For example, Matthew 2:23 states:

...And he went and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, 'He shall be called a Nazarene'.

The 'prophets' (plural) suggests that several passages may be in mind, but it is most difficult to trace the origins of this alleged prophecy. It is probably an allusion to Isaiah 11:1:

...There shall come forth a shoot (netzer) from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots.

This verse describes the Messiah as a 'shoot' (netzer), implying that, like a tree cut down, the Davidic dynasty will grow up once more and the kingdom be re-established. It would appear that Matthew has taken the consonants of netzer and interpreted them as a prophecy referring to Nazareth. This method of interpretation, far-fetched though it may seem, was in common use among the rabbis of Jesus' time, as well as within the community at Qumran. Thus, Dunn concludes:

...the Jewish scriptures remained authoritative, particularly for Jewish Christians, but not in themselves, only as interpreted. For many others of the first Christians we have to put it more sharply: the Jewish scriptures remained authoritative only to the extent that they could be adequately re-interpreted by and in relation to the new revelation of Jesus.¹⁴⁰

Therefore, it is clear that the Muslim method of exegesis which re-interprets the term paraclētos, as found in the Fourth Gospel, as a prophecy with regard to Muḥammad is akin to the above-cited examples of peshar quotation where Old Testament texts are re-interpreted by Christians as prophecies about Jesus. In short, the method of interpretation as referred to above is the same within Christianity and Islam. Consequently, the Muslim re-interpretation of paraclētos and its application to Muḥammad is, from a purely exegetical viewpoint, legitimate and in keeping with the procedure of the earliest Christians in their re-interpretation of certain texts from the Old Testament in favour of Jesus. Nonetheless, the New Testament writers re-interpreted texts from the Old Testament within a particular understanding of history, which is in continuity with that of the prophets themselves. In this connection, Dodd comments:

...The prophets saw history as the field upon which the living God perpetually confronts man with a challenge...His (God's) impact upon human

society reveals itself negatively as judgment upon human action, positively as power of renewal, or redemption.

...They bore witness that it would emerge fully only in an event in which absolute judgment and absolute redemption should become actual among men. Taking up this view of history the earliest thinkers of Christianity declared that in the ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ this act of absolute judgment and absolute redemption had taken place.¹⁴¹

The Christian belief that God was in Christ in a unique and final way, and the Christian understanding of the Holy Spirit (paraclētos), were the chief factors which motivated the New Testament writers to re-interpret passages of the Old Testament, in continuity with the prophets' understanding of history, as prophecies about Christ. From the Christian perspective, Christ's decision to face the consequences of his ministry passively led to a complete vicarious mediation which initiated the coming of the Holy Spirit (paraclētos). The Muslim contention that paraclētos is a definite reference to Muḥammad can find some support from the methods of exegesis common to Judaism and Christianity. However, the notion of vicarious mediation is present within Hebrew prophecy¹⁴², and such a concept cannot be reconciled with Muḥammad's choice to embrace the power-structure in order to advance Islam; nor can the said choice find any parallel with the New Testament portrayal of the work of the Holy Spirit (paraclētos).

Next, 'Alī b. Sahl b. Rabbān al-Ṭabarī (died 855), was a Nestorian Christian and he converted to Islam in his seventieth year. He is named as the author of two¹⁴³ books, namely, Al-radd 'alā 'I-Naṣārā (Refutation of Christianity), and Kitāb al-dīn wal-dawla (The Book of Religion and Empire. The latter work draws heavily from the Hebrew Psalms in a bid to establish prophecies about Muḥammad. For example, the said work states:

...And David - peace be with him - said in the forty-eighth psalm: 'Great is our Lord, and He is greatly Mahmud; and in the city of our God and in His mountain, there is a Holy One and a Muhammad; and the joy hath come to the whole earth'. This prophecy of David - peace be with him - is clearness and explicitness itself which cannot suffer any ambiguity.¹⁴⁴

The Muslim author under consideration appears to quote from the East Syrian version of the Bible.¹⁴⁵ This version differs slightly from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible which renders Psalm 48: 1-2 as follows:

...Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised in the city of our God! His holy mountain, beautiful in elevation, is the joy of all the earth, Mount Zion, in the far North, the city of the great King.

The above verses contain a summons to praise God and a description of Jerusalem, the proper place for his worship. The Muslim author in question assumes that the word 'praised' is a clear reference to the name Muḥammad which means 'praised'. Further, in the East Syrian Bible Psalm 48:1 states, 'In the city of our God and in his holy and glorious mountain'. As stated above, the Muslim author under review interprets this sentence as a clear prophecy relating to Muḥammad. That is, the word 'glorious' (praised) is rendered as Muḥammad. Gaudeul, commenting on this interpretation of the above sentence, states:

...A not very natural rendering of a Syriac sentence...Strictly speaking, however, it can have the meaning given to it by the author.¹⁴⁶

In addition, the author of The Book of Religion and Empire cites another five Pslams¹⁴⁷ which he considers as prophecies in respect of Muḥammad. In each case he interprets the word 'praise' as an unambiguous reference to Muḥammad. As has been pointed out, this method of exegesis is identical to

some examples of pesher quotation used by early Christian exegetes in their attempt to establish 'proof-texts' from the Old Testament as prophecies relating to Jesus. In reality, the application to Jesus, or to Muhammad, of certain verses of the Bible through pesher quotation does not prove anything and, according to Watt, 'it is no more than a curious accident'.¹⁴⁸

Furthermore, the author in question goes on to claim that Daniel refers to Muhammad:

...I have found also another resplendent and wonderful prophecy in the Books of Daniel. He says: 'Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days'. I have carefully examined this, and found that it refers to the Muslim faith, and more especially to this 'Abbāsid kingdom; indeed Daniel must have meant by this number either days, or months, or years.

...If they say that he meant years, the number would end with this 'Abbāsid kingdom, because from the time of Daniel to that of the Christ there are about five hundred years. The proof of this is what has been revealed to him that he and his people shall remain seventy weeks in the deportation, then they shall return to Jerusalem, and the Messiah shall be sent. And from the time of the Messiah to this year there are eight hundred and sixty-seven years. This, in counting from our time, reaches this 'Abbāsid kingdom, with a difference of something more than thirty years.

...If somebody says that the prophetic days do not mean years, but a mystery that arithmetic by alphabet might find out, I thought also of that, and discovered that the number of these days was equivalent to the total of the numerical value of the letters of the words Muḥammad Khātimul - Anbia Maḥdī Mājid (Muḥammad, the last prophet, the Maḥdī, the illustrious), because if the numerical value of these vocables is calculated, it will give what we have shown; and they are five words.¹⁴⁹

The book of Daniel is classified, by Jews and Christians, as apocalyptic literature.¹⁵⁰ This type of literature seeks to present God's revelation concerning the end-time and the establishment of the kingdom of God. The uniform view of Hebrew and Christian tradition was that Daniel was an historic person who composed his book in the sixth century B.C.¹⁵¹ This view accords with the Muslim author under review when he portrays Daniel and Jesus as persons five hundred years apart in history. It appears, however, that the book of Daniel was written at some stage during the second century B.C.¹⁵² The author of the book of Daniel rehearses the story of the past to enable persecuted Jews to see that their sufferings are within the purposes of God. Daniel 12:7 proclaims that the kingdom of God will be inaugurated in 'a time, two times, and half a time'. Later editors¹⁵³ of the book of Daniel extended this time to 1,290 days (12:11) and to 1,335 days (12:12). That is to say, when nothing happened after each specified time the period was extended to provide further time for the establishment of the new kingdom. According to First Maccabees,¹⁵⁴ the Jewish patriot, Judas Maccabeus, rededicated the altar and resumed sacrifices in the Temple three years to the day after the desecration by Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-163 B.C.) of the Seleucid Dynasty. Antiochus, in his attempt to Hellenize the Jews, had a pig sacrificed on the altar in Jerusalem and forbade circumcision and sacrifices. Some Christian scholars¹⁵⁵ point out that Antiochus' prohibition of sacrifices may have been enforced some weeks before the altar was desecrated and thus the 1,150 days, or less precisely 3½ years (Daniel 7:25; 9:27; 12:7), may be the actual period during which the daily offerings were suspended.

The Muslim author whose work is under review interprets the 1,335 days of Daniel 12:12 as years. He goes on to assume, incorrectly, that the period between Daniel and Jesus is about five hundred years, and thus the remaining eight hundred and thirty-five years correspond to the period from Jesus to the 'Abbāsid kingdom. Further, the said Muslim

author proceeds to interpret parts of Daniel 9: 24-25 literally and, thereby, he creates what appears to be a curious anachronism. Daniel 9: 24-25 states:

...Seventy weeks of years are decreed concerning your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place.

...Know therefore and understand that from the going forth of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of an anointed one, a prince, there shall be seven weeks. Then for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again with squares and moat, but in a troubled time.

The notion of weeks of years was familiar to Daniel¹⁵⁶, and 'seventy weeks of years' correspond to 490 years at the end of which the Jews will have atoned for their sins. The end of the first group of seven weeks brings an anointed one, a prince. The reference is probably to Cyrus, king of Persia (c. 600-520 B.C.), who prophecy declared to have been anointed by God to effect the return of the exiles to Jerusalem.¹⁵⁷ Likewise, the Muslim author in question accepts that the first seven weeks (49 years) refer to the Jews in exile in Babylon. Moreover, he states that he is writing in the year 867, but The Book of Religion and Empire was written under the reign of Mutawakkil (died 861). Commenting on this point, Gaudeul states:

...The apparent anachronism may possibly be explained by the chronology adopted by the majority of the ancient Syrian writers in connection with the life of the Prophet whom they believed to have been born in the year 892 of the Seleucids, instead of 882. This would give the Christian date 857 (A.H. 243). Further, it is a well known fact that between the Seleucid era adopted in the Syrian Churches and that followed in the West there are two years of difference, these having been added by some Western writers to the Eastern computation. If we take these two

years into account we should ascribe the composition of the present work to A.D. 855 (A.H. 241), or the 9th year of Mutawakkil's caliphate.¹⁵⁸

In any case, the Muslim author whose work we are considering assumes that the 1,335 days (Daniel 12:12) should be interpreted as years. He goes on to proclaim that from Daniel's time to that of his own there are 1367 years (i.e. 500 + 867). The author in question asserts that the difference between the two dates (1335 and 1367) is 32, and he interprets the numerical value of this number to correspond with the letters of, Muhammad Khātimul - Anbiā Mahdī Mājīd (Muhammad, the last prophet, the Mahdī, the illustrious).

Throughout the book of Daniel the notion of deliverance is portrayed in terms of God's action rather than by any human hand. Hence, perhaps it is best to interpret the numbers in question symbolically. The 1,290 days symbolising the period of Antiochus' persecution, and the 1,335 days apparently symbolise the whole period of persecution unto the end-time, which is still to come.¹⁵⁹ Accordingly, any interpretation of Daniel 12:12 as a reference to an historical figure would appear to be inappropriate. Thus, the above quoted Muslim author who cites Daniel 12:12 as a 'resplendent and wonderful prophecy' in respect of Muhammad is guilty of misinterpreting the central message of the book of Daniel. Also, the said author interprets Daniel (9:24-25) in accordance with his own pre-conceived ideas that the Bible speaks of Muhammad. Yet, such a method of exegesis is akin to some methods of peshar quotation used by Christians to interpret Old Testament texts as prophecies applicable to Jesus.

Furthermore, the above example of a Muslim author ascribing prophetic significance to dubious numbers appears to be

absurd. Nonetheless, the author of the Fourth Gospel (John 21:11) states:

...So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three of them; and although there were so many, the net was not torn.

This verse is taken from a narrative which portrays the risen Christ. The number of fish, one hundred and fifty-three, has inspired many Christian attempts at symbolic interpretation. For example, Origen (c. 185- c.254), the Alexandrian theologian, considered the number 153 as a reference to the doctrine of the Trinity because the said number can be divided into three equal parts of which two are themselves 'threes' (i.e. $153 = (50 \times 3) + 3$)¹⁶⁰. In this connection Owen states:

...Hebrew and Greek letters have numerical values assigned to them. This means that a particular word or phrase possesses a numerical value when the values of its constituent letters are added together. The process is called gematria...¹⁶¹

Some Christian scholars¹⁶² believe that the author of the Fourth Gospel wants to establish a parallel between the final departure of Moses and the final withdrawal of the risen Christ to his own place. Hence, it is suggested that the departure of Moses is associated with Mount Pisgah, and the gematria for the number of Pisgah is 153 which corresponds to the 153 fishes of John 21:1. Therefore, the notion of numbers as a means to endorse pre-conceived theological beliefs was common to some early exponents within Christianity and Islam.

Furthermore, the notion that the Bible contains predictions regarding Muhammad was advocated by an anonymous Muslim writer via the pages of the Muslim paper, Al Fath, published in Cairo in 1935. The Christian scholar, James Robson,

reproduced the article in question in The Muslim World (1935).¹⁶³ Some of these so-called prophecies have already been discussed. But one which has not been covered rehearses John 1:19-25:

...And this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, 'Who are you?' He confessed, he did not deny, but confessed, 'I am not the Christ'. And they asked him, 'What then? Are you Elijah?' He said, 'I am not'. 'Are you the prophet?' And he answered, 'No'. They said to him then, 'Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?' He said, 'I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord', as the prophet Isaiah said'.

The Muslim writer in question comments of this passage as follows:

...Moses had promised another prophet like unto himself (Deut. 18:15), so Elijah, the Messiah and this prophet were expected. The people thought John the Baptist must be one of the three, but he denied this. He was mistaken, however, for Jesus said that John came in the spirit of Elijah. So John was Elijah, Jesus was the Messiah; it remains to decide who was 'the prophet'. The use of the article shows that he was one whose characteristics were known. He was the prophet of whom Moses spoke, and no one fits this description but Muḥammad.¹⁶⁴

At first sight, the above comments appear to be a logical assessment of John 1:19-25. This New Testament passage portrays a deputation from some of the Jerusalem Jews with the challenge to John the Baptist to declare his identity. John denies categorically all claim to any special status or authority in Judaism. He is not 'the Christ', or 'Elijah', or 'the prophet'. In inter-Testamental Judaism there was the common expectation that an eschatological prophet would deliver God's final revelation to Israel at the end-time. Accordingly, Vermes comments:

...This so called eschatological prophet assumes two different forms in the sources, one dependent on the figure of Elijah and the other on that of Moses, both of them drawn from classic scriptural proof-texts. It is with these two that early Gospel tradition associates the 'prophet' Jesus.¹⁶⁵

Thus, the designations 'the Christ', 'Elijah', and 'the prophet' (John 1:21) do not refer to three distinct figures. Or, to put it another way, in Jewish apocalyptic thought it appears that some looked for a Messiah in the rôle of Elijah. In Mark 6:15 Jesus is identified with Elijah. Other Jews, perhaps the majority, awaited the advent of an Elijah - like forerunner to the Messiah.¹⁶⁶ In Mark 9:13 Jesus identifies John the Baptist with Elijah. Whereas, the Fourth Gospel applies the rôle of 'the prophet' to Jesus.¹⁶⁷

All in all, the New Testament portrays Jesus as the final¹⁶⁸ prophet referred to by Moses (Deut. 18:18-19). As previously stated, the concept of vicarious suffering was a definite element within the ministry of Moses, and this concept, according to Christians, reached its zenith in the Christ-event. Consequently, from the Christian viewpoint, the Muslim claim that Deuteronomy 18:18-19 and John 1:21 both relate to Muḥammad cannot be reconciled with the Christian understanding of vicarious atonement which is inherent within the verses in question. Muḥammad's use of the power-structure in his bid to promote Islam is at variance with the notion of vicarious suffering which was a reality in the ministry of Moses and Jesus respectively. Yet, as has been pointed out, the Muslim practice of plucking Biblical verses from their context and interpreting them as references to Muḥammad, is similar to some forms of pesher quotation used by Christians in an attempt to prove that the Old Testament speaks of Jesus. In reality, such alleged prophecies, as deemed by Christians or Muslims, are nothing but curious accidents, and they are of little theological worth to either

Christianity or Islam. Because, according to Watt:

...it is not part of God's practice to cause prophets to utter cryptic sentences whose meaning will only become clear centuries later!¹⁶⁹

Section 3.3: The Status of Muhammad According to the Gospel of Barnabas

The Muslim writer, Muhammad Atā-ur-Rahim (died 1978), considers the Gospel of Barnabas to be:

...the only known surviving Gospel written by a disciple of Jesus. He therefore had direct experience and knowledge of Jesus's teaching, unlike all the authors of the four accepted Gospels.¹⁷⁰

Is the above statement correct? In order to answer this question we must first look at the external history of the Gospel of Barnabas. The first manuscript of this Gospel is presently in the National Library in Vienna. It is written in Italian with, according to Slomp, 'characteristics of two dialects, one spoken in Venice, the other in the Tuscan region of about the sixteenth century'.¹⁷¹ The first written references to this manuscript appear in Menagiana¹⁷² (Paris, 1715) by Bernard de la Monnoye, and in Bibliothèque Angloise ou Histoire Littéraire de la Grande Bretagne¹⁷³ (1718) by Thomas Mongey, Rector of Guilford, London. Moreover, the humanist Toland in his Nazarenus (1736) refers to the Gospel of Barnabas as follows:

...It is a Mahometan Gospel never publicly made known among Christians tho they have much talked about the Mahometans acknowledging the Gospel...The learned gentleman who has been so kind as to communicate it to me (viz. Mr Cramer, Counsellor to the King of Prussia, but residing in Amsterdam) had it out of the library of a person of great name and authority in the said city.¹⁷⁴

The Christian apologist, Jan Slomp, considers that the above mentioned 'person of great name and authority' was the Italian scholar, Gregorio Leti¹⁷⁵, father-in-law of the Anglican clergyman, Thomas Mongey, already referred to. Leti was the chief historian of the city of Amsterdam, and his

library was sold on the 25th of October 1701. The German diplomat, J.F. Cramer, acquired the Gospel of Barnabas in Amsterdam in the year 1709.¹⁷⁶

In 1734 George Sale translated the Qur'ān into English. In addition to the Italian manuscript of the Gospel of Barnabas, Sale refers to the existence of a Spanish manuscript of the said Gospel.¹⁷⁷ There was no trace of this Spanish manuscript until 1976 when a partial copy of the text in question was discovered in the University of Sydney, Australia. According to Sale, the title page of the Spanish manuscript proclaims it to be a translation from the Italian by a Spanish Muslim named Mostafa de Aranda.¹⁷⁸ Further, Sale relates that the Spanish manuscript contains the history of the discovery of the original manuscript by Fra Marino in the time of Pope Sixtus V (1585 - 1599). The history of this alleged discovery is portrayed in the account furnished by Fra Marino and related by Sale as follows:

...having accidentally met with a writing of Irenaeus...wherein he speaks against St. Paul, alleging for his authority the Gospel of St. Barnabas, he became exceeding desirous to find this Gospel; and that God...having made him very intimate with Pope Sixtus V, one day as they were in that Pope's library, His Holiness fell asleep, and he...reaching down for a book to read, the first he laid his hand on proved to be the very gospel he wanted...and by reading of which he became a convert to Muhammadanism.¹⁷⁹

The above sentiments are in continuity with the recently discovered Spanish manuscript.¹⁸⁰ However, the above story is strange. First, there is no extant information about the alleged Muslim translator, Mostafa de Aranda; nor is there any appeal to an Arabic original of the Gospel of Barnabas. The story about the sleeping pontiff and Fra Marino is, according to Gairdner, 'a romance rather than a real incident'.¹⁸¹ But the said story has a definite purpose. Thus, Slomp states:

...The story implies that the church had hidden the true gospel of Jesus Christ and needed a Muslim to rediscover it. The lack of alertness is portrayed in the sleeping pontiff. He is supposed to be vigilant and protect the spiritual treasures under his care.¹⁸²

Furthermore, in the preface of the Spanish manuscript under review Irenaeus is presented as one who, in the light of the Gospel of Barnabas, is opposed to St. Paul. Irenaeus (c. 130 to c. 200) was bishop of Lyons and the first great Catholic theologian. His great work entitled Against Heresies was written between 182 and 188.¹⁸³ In this work Irenaeus makes no mention of the Gospel of Barnabas. On the contrary, he states:

...It is not possible that the Gospels can be either more or fewer in number than they are. For, since there are four zones of the world in which we live, and four principal winds, while the church is scattered throughout all the world...it is fitting that she should have four pillars, breathing out immortality on every side, and vivifying men afresh.¹⁸⁴

Thus, Irenaeus was familiar with only the four canonical Gospels. Additionally, in opposition to heretics who claimed that Paul engaged in unorthodox teaching, Irenaeus contends that Paul's long association with Luke is proof that Paul's presentation of the Gospel was in conformity with that of the other apostles. Irenaeus states:

...But surely if Luke, who always preached in company with Paul, and is called by him 'the beloved', and with him performed the work of an evangelist, and was entrusted to hand down to us a Gospel, learned nothing different from him (Paul), as has been pointed out from his words, how can these men, who were never attached to Paul, boast that they have learned hidden and unspeakable mysteries?¹⁸⁵

Consequently, the assertion found in the Spanish manuscript of the Gospel of Barnabas which cites Irenaeus as one opposed

to Paul is completely discredited by the above extracts from the writings of Irenaeus.

Next, the Gelasian Decrees¹⁸⁶ attributed to Pope Gelasius (492-496) refer to an Evangelium Barnabe (Gospel of Barnabas) as one of the heretical books dismissed by the church. However the Gelasian Decrees may not be genuine. That is,, they probably emanate from a private source in Italy in the early sixth century.¹⁸⁷ The Gelasian Decrees were printed and published during the early sixteenth century and were therefore readily available in various libraries.¹⁸⁸ Thus, Slomp agrees with Jomier that:

...a forger...could easily have had access to these Decrees and taken hold of the title in order to give his own book some air of truth and respectability. The conclusion...is quite clear: the G.B.V. has no history prior to the last quarter of the 16th century...¹⁸⁹

In 1907 Laura and Lonsdale Ragg translated the Italian manuscript of the Gospel of Barnabas into English.¹⁹⁰ In 1908 the said Gospel was translated into Arabic and Urdu and since then it has been published in many parts of the Muslim world. What do the contents of this Gospel reveal? The Introduction to the Gospel in question states:

...The True Gospel of Jesus, called Christ, a new prophet sent by God to the world: according to the description of Barnabas his apostle. Barnabas, apostle of Jesus the Nazarene, called Christ, to all them that dwell upon the earth desireth peace and consolation.

...Dearly beloved, the great and wonderful God hath during these past days visited us by his prophet Jesus Christ in great mercy of teaching and miracles, by reason whereof many, being deceived of Satan, under pretence of piety, are preaching most impious doctrine, calling Jesus son of God, repudiating the circumcision ordained of God for ever, and permitting every unclean meat: among whom also Paul hath been deceived, whereof I speak not without grief.¹⁹¹

The author of the above paragraphs makes it clear that he is relating the 'true Gospel of Jesus'. Is it logical to assume that only a forger would think of stating that his production is the 'true Gospel'?¹⁹² Also, the author of the Gospel in question portrays Jesus as one who is only called Christ (Messiah) because, as we shall see later, Muḥammad is presented as the Christ (Messiah). In the Introduction to the Gospel of Barnabas Jesus is cast in the rôle of a prophet sent to the world. Indeed, Islam asserts that Jesus was one in the line of prophets sent to Israel. The author under review appears to forget that Muslim polemicists restrict Jesus' ministry to the people of Israel. Without doubt, the canonical Gospels portray Jesus in the rôle of a prophet.¹⁹³ Yet, according to Dunn:

...it was not simply as a prophet that Jesus saw himself. Rather the clear implication is that he saw his role as unique: his was the role of eschatological prophet...only through his Spirit-empowered ministry was the eschatological rule of God realized (Matt. 12.28/Luke 11.20; 'something greater than Jonah' - Matt. 12.41/Luke 11.32.¹⁹⁴

Moreover, Jesus believed that the ministry of John the Baptist marked the end of prophecy.¹⁹⁵ Thus, Jesus is adamant that with his own advent the era of the law and the prophets is ended. This belief accords with his claim that his words will abide forever.¹⁹⁶ Therefore, the Gospel of Barnabas, in continuity with Muslim thought, fails to acknowledge the New Testament understanding of Jesus which goes beyond the concept of prophethood.

Further, the Gospel in question utterly repudiates the notion that Jesus is 'Son of God', and this repudiation is in unison with Muslim belief. Muslims regard it as blasphemy to call Jesus 'Son of God'.¹⁹⁷

Orthodox Muslims accept the Quranic portrayal of the virginal conception of Jesus, but they tend to equate the Biblical idea of Jesus' Sonship with some sort of sexual process. According to the Bible, 'God is spirit'.¹⁹⁸ Any suggestion that God had sexual intercourse with a mortal woman is, quite rightly, rejected by Christians and Muslims. What, then, does the New Testament mean when Jesus is called 'Son of God'? In this regard, Macquarrie comments:

...To speak of Jesus as 'Son of God' is to use a metaphor...It arises within a long traditional usage, in which a person close to or considered to be an agent of God might be called his son. Jesus does not appear to have called himself 'Son of God' any more than he called himself 'messiah', but the tradition does indicate that he had a special sense of the fatherhood of God, and expressed this in a word of peculiar intimacy, abba.¹⁹⁹

To interpret the term 'Son of God' as the designation of an agent of God is to move very close to the Muslim understanding of Jesus, and the portrayal of Jesus as presented by the Gospel of Barnabas. Nonetheless, the Christian concept of the fatherhood of God can find no echo within Islam or the said Gospel. Also, in the New Testament²⁰⁰ the title 'Son of God' is linked with the phrase 'Son of Man'. The association of these two phrases is significant. That is, Moule states:

...One of the messages which emerge most clearly from Mark's Gospel is that the suffering Son of Man it is who is to be gloriously vindicated, that the meaning of greatness is service, that to be God's Son means to be dedicated unconditionally to God's purposes, even to death.²⁰¹

Therefore, from the Christian perspective, the notion of Jesus as 'Son of God' is interpreted in the light of his deliberate choice to face the consequences of his ministry passively which led to his death on the cross and his

glorious resurrection. As we shall see, the Gospel of Barnabas rejects any suggestion that Jesus died in the manner related by the New Testament.

Furthermore, the Gospel of Barnabas condemns Christians for 'repudiating the circumcision'. In apostolic times the Judaizing section of the church wanted to enforce circumcision on Gentile converts. The Council of Jerusalem ruled against the Judaizers (Acts 15:23-29). However, the practice of circumcision was maintained in some of the Ethiopian and Abyssinian churches.²⁰² In twelfth century Italy there was a Christian sect of circumcisi.²⁰³ Certainly, among Christians baptism superseded circumcision, but the author of the Gospel of Barnabas is incorrect when he claims that circumcision was repudiated by the church.²⁰⁴ Next, the author under review accuses many Christians of 'permitting every unclean meat'. According to the Acts of the Apostles, the early church agreed that Gentile converts to Christianity should:

...abstain from the pollutions of idols and from
unchastity and from what is strangled and from
blood.²⁰⁵

Thus the accusation, as put forward by the author of the Gospel of Barnabas, that many Christians have accepted every unclean meat cannot be substantiated. Paul, however, publicly adopts a more liberal attitude to the eating of food offered to idols and claims that 'an idol has no real existence'.²⁰⁶ Nonetheless, Paul remains sensitive to the feelings of others and asserts 'I will never eat meat, lest I cause my brother to fall'.²⁰⁷

The author of the Gospel of Barnabas portrays Paul as one who had erred from the way of truth. If the author in question was the Biblical Barnabas it is strange that he should criticise Paul in respect of doctrinal matters. For

instance, at the start of Christian missionary work at Antioch, the church in Jerusalem sent Barnabas there to give the work direction. In time, Barnabas went to Tarsus and brought back Paul as his associate.²⁰⁸ Paul and Barnabas ministered together at Cyprus, Antioch in Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe. After their return to Antioch, the church sent them to the council at Jerusalem.²⁰⁹ Moreover, they were commissioned to carry the decrees of the council to the churches in Syria and Asia Minor.²¹⁰ The beginning of a difference between the two men is suggested by Paul in Galatians.²¹¹ This was followed by a more serious break when, after Paul had suggested a second missionary journey, he refused to take along Mark, the cousin of Barnabas, on the singular ground that he had left them on their first journey. Consequently, the two men separated, Barnabas going with Mark to Cyprus, while Paul went to Asia Minor.²¹² Nevertheless, there is no suggestion in the New Testament that Paul and Barnabas had any differences of opinion on matters of doctrine. Paul's allusions to Barnabas in his letters show that he continued to hold his former associate in high esteem.²¹³ The conclusion arrived at so far is that the Introduction to the Gospel of Barnabas does not reflect any accurate knowledge of New Testament Christianity. On the contrary, the work in question betrays a bias to Islamic Christology in that Jesus is presented as a prophet only. As to the identity of the author of the said Gospel, it is becoming increasingly difficult to ascribe this work to the Biblical Barnabas.

Further, according to the Gospel of Barnabas (chapter 43), Jesus is not the Messiah, but his fore-runner, only Muḥammad is the Messiah sent to all nations. The said Gospel states:

...Then said Andrew: 'Thou hast told us many things of the Messiah, therefore of thy kindness tell us clearly all'. And in like manner the other disciples besought him..

...Accordingly Jesus said...verily I say unto you, that every prophet when he is come hath borne to one nation only the mark of the mercy of God. And so their words were not extended to save to that people to which they were sent. But the messenger of God, when he shall come, God shall give to him as it were the seal of his hand, insomuch that he shall carry salvation and mercy to all the nations of the world that shall receive his doctrine.²¹⁴

According to the above sentiments, Muḥammad, not Jesus, is the Messiah. Muḥammad is presented as the messenger of God. Moreover, Jesus is depicted as a prophet sent to one nation, whereas Muḥammad shall be the messenger of God to all nations. Yet, was Jesus' ministry confined to one nation, namely, Israel? In this regard, Matthew records:

...These twelve Jesus sent out, charging them, 'Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.²¹⁵

This verse would appear to suggest that the historical Jesus never envisaged a systematic mission to the Gentiles. Casey, commenting on this point, considers that 'there was no mission to the Gentiles during the historic ministry, and Gentile faith was regarded as remarkable'.²¹⁶ Therefore, the Gospel of Barnabas is correct when it contends that Jesus' historic ministry was confined to one nation. However, from the Christian viewpoint, Küng comments:

...In the pre-Easter period, Jesus, by his preaching and ministry, laid the foundations for the emergence of a post-resurrection Church.²¹⁷

Following the resurrection of Jesus the church gradually adopted the notion of a universal mission to all nations.²¹⁸ Similarly, according to the Qur'ān, the treasure of the Gospel (injīl) is neither for the Children of Israel nor for Christians alone, but for all who fear God.²¹⁹ The above-cited facts find no echo in the Gospel of Barnabas.

The claim that Muḥammad, not Jesus, is the Messiah is restated in the Gospel of Barnabas via the following verses:

...Said the woman: 'O Lord, perchance thou art the Messiah'. Jesus answered: 'I am indeed sent to the house of Israel as a prophet of salvation; but after me shall come the Messiah, sent by God to all the world'.²²⁰

...The priest answered: 'I pray thee tell us the truth, art thou the Messiah of God whom we expect?' Jesus answered...indeed I am not he, for he is made before me, and shall come after me'.²²¹

...Jesus answered: 'I have confessed also that I am not the Messiah'.²²²

Needless to say, the above accusations are contrary to the witness of the New Testament. For one thing, according to Mark:

...And he (Jesus) asked them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Peter answered him, 'You are the Christ'. And he charged them to tell no one about him.²²³

Hence, it may be argued²²⁴ that Jesus at least accepted the title 'Christ' (Messiah). According to Cullmann:

...The early Church believed in Christ's messiahship only because it believed that Jesus believed himself to be Messiah.²²⁵

Moreover, in Hebrew thought the Messiah was expected to inaugurate a new era of righteousness and peace under the rule of God, but it was usually accepted that this could only be accomplished via struggle and war. Thus, the death of Jesus on the cross should have terminated any belief that he was the Messiah in the popular sense. After his death, however, the followers of Jesus used the title 'Messiah' or 'Christ' for him. Why, then, did the said title survive? Moule thinks that if Jesus:

...had interpreted messiahship...in terms of suffering and service and, only by that route and in that sense, of vindication and royal status, then it seems conceivable that the title might have been revived and perpetuated after he had been crucified.²²⁶

The notion of Jesus as a suffering Messiah is in line with orthodox Christian theology. The Christian concept of pathos and vicarious suffering on the part of Jesus is dismissed by Muslims. But the Qur'ān frequently²²⁷ calls Jesus al-Masīh (the Messiah). The Qur'ān does not explain the meaning of the term al-Masīh, or why Jesus alone is designated as al-Masīh. Still, the point to be noted is that the author of the Gospel of Barnabas contradicts both the Bible and the Qur'ān when he portrays Muḥammad as the Messiah instead of Jesus. Slomp, commenting on the Arabic translation of the Gospel of Barnabas and the said apparent contradiction, states:

...The Arabic translation changes al-Masīh, the correct translation of the Italian il-Messiak, to Masīyyā in order to avoid contradiction with the Qur'ān which gives the title al-Masīh not to Muḥammad (as the Gospel of Barnabas does) but to Jesus.²²⁸

Additionally, the ending of chapter 44 of the Gospel of Barnabas presents Jesus as saying:

...I therefore say unto you that the messenger of God is a splendour that shall give gladness to nearly all that God hath made...O blessed time, when he shall come to the world! Believe me that I have seen him and have done him reverence, even as every prophet hath seen him: seeing that of his spirit God giveth to them prophecy. And when I saw him my soul was filled with consolation, saying: 'O Mohammed, God be with thee, and may he make me worthy to untie thy shoelatchet, for obtaining this I shall be a great prophet and holy one of God'. And having said this, Jesus rendered his thanks to God.²²⁹

Thus, Muḥammad is presented as the messenger of God. In contrast, Jesus is portrayed as a prophet, and he assumes the rôle of John the Baptist in reference to Muḥammad. The Gospel of Barnabas, unlike the Bible²³⁰ and the Qur'ān,²³¹ has no reference to John the Baptist and his office as forerunner to Jesus. Therefore it is obvious that the Gospel of Barnabas is significantly at variance with the Bible and the Qur'ān and, thereby, the said Gospel's claim to authenticity cannot be sustained by either Christians or Muslims.

In chapter 82 of the Gospel of Barnabas Jesus is portrayed as saying:

...I am indeed sent to the house of Israel as a prophet of salvation; but after me shall come the Messiah...for whom God hath made the world. And then through all the world will God be worshipped, and mercy received, insomuch that the year of jubilee, which now cometh every hundred years, shall by the Messiah be reduced to every year in every place.²³²

According to the above comments, the year of jubilee has been increased from fifty years, as specified in Leviticus²³³, to one hundred years. How can we account for this increase? Boniface VIII (c. 1234 to 1303) was Pope from 1294. In 1300, Boniface VIII instituted the Jubilee or Holy Year. That is to say, a year during which the Pope grants a special Indulgence, the so-called Jubilee, to all pilgrims who visit Rome. It was the wish of Boniface VIII to have the Jubilee as a centenary event. However, Clement VI (1291 to 1352) was elected Pope in 1342, and in 1343 he changed the period to fifty years. Accordingly, the next Jubilee was celebrated in 1350. Gairdner believes that the Gospel of Barnabas reflects the ruling of Boniface VIII with regard to the Jubilee every one hundred years. Gairdner states:

...It is clear, therefore, that 'Barnabas' falls after 1300, but before 1350, and that he refers

to the jubilee of his times. In other words, he must have been a contemporary of Dante, who witnessed the celebration of the centenary jubilee...²³⁴

On the other hand, Slomp offers a different explanation with regard to the question in hand. He draws attention to the fact that in 1470 the Jubilee was held every twenty-five years.²³⁵ However, according to Slomp, there is:

...an interesting exception, namely 1585 when Pope Sixtus V (mentioned in the preface to the Spanish edition of the Gospel of Barnabas) started his office. He did start with a jubilee, creating herewith the impression that every or any year could become a jubilee...This tempts me to assume that the exact year of the writing of this passage (ch. 82) was 1585.²³⁶

In any case, the above-cited evidence afforded by Gairdner and Slomp portrays the Gospel of Barnabas as a product of the Middle Ages.

Further, Gairdner suggests that the author of the Gospel of Barnabas was a contemporary of Dante. The famous Italian poet, Dante Alighieri (1265-1321), was born at Florence. He composed the greatest poem of the Middle Ages, called *La Divina Commedia* (The Divine Comedy). This poem assumed its final shape between the years 1314 and 1321.²³⁷ The subject of the Divine Comedy depicts the poet experiencing hell (Inferno), heaven (Purgatorio) and the highest heaven (Paradiso). For instance, Dante describes the First Circle of Hell as follows:

...We walked right over it as on hard ground;
through seven gates I passed with those wise
spirits, and then we reached a meadow fresh in
bloom.²³⁸

The author of the Gospel of Barnabas appears to express the notion of hell in terms remarkably similar to those used by

Dante. The said Gospel relates:

...Know ye therefore, that hell is one, yet hath seven centres one below another. Hence, even as sin is of seven kinds, for as seven gates of hell hath Satan generated it: so are there seven punishments therein.²³⁹

Also, Dante's Inferno contains the following references to the snow and ice of hell:

...Thick hail and dirty water mixed with snow come down in torrents through the murky air, and the earth is stinking from this soaking rain.²⁴⁰

...At that I turned around and saw before me a lake of ice stretching beneath my feet, more like a sheet of glass than frozen water.²⁴¹

The author of the Gospel in question claims that God, having created the human senses, condemned them 'to hell and to intolerable snow and ice'.²⁴² In the light of the above similarities between the Gospel of Barnabas and Dante's Inferno, Gairdner considers that 'our Barnabas was either a contemporary of, or a successor to, Dante'.²⁴³

Next in the Gospel of Barnabas (chapter 112) there is the following story which presents Jesus as saying:

...Know therefore Barnabas, that for this I have to be wary. One of my disciples will betray me for thirty pieces of silver. Furthermore, I am sure that he who betrays me will be killed in my name, because God will lift me up from the earth and change the appearance of the one who betrays me so that everyone will think him to be me. And when he dies a very awful death, I will remain in that shame a long time in the world. But when Muhammad, the holy apostle of God comes, this disgrace will be removed from me.²⁴⁴

Further, in chapters 216 to 220 of the Gospel of Barnabas the notion of the substitute of Judas for Jesus is confirmed:

...Judas entered impetuously before all into the chamber whence Jesus had been taken up. And the disciples were sleeping. Whereupon the wonderful God acted wonderfully, insomuch that Judas was so changed in speech and in face to be like Jesus that we believed him to be Jesus...²⁴⁵

...The soldiers took Judas and bound him, not without derision...So they led him to Mount Calvary, where they used to hang malefactors, and there they crucified him naked, for the greater ignominy.²⁴⁶

...Those disciples who did not fear God went by night and stole the body of Judas and hid it, spreading a report that Jesus was risen again...²⁴⁷

...Wherefore Jesus prayed God that he would give him power to see his mother and his disciples. Then the merciful God commanded his four favourite angels, who are Gabriel, Michael, Rafael, and Uriel, to bear Jesus into his mother's house, and there keep watch over him for three days continually, suffering him only to be seen by them that believed in his doctrine.²⁴⁸

...Jesus answered: 'Believe me, Barnabas...Wherefore since my mother and my faithful disciples that were with me loved me a little with earthly love, the righteous God hath willed to punish this love with the present grief, in order that it may not be punished in the flames of hell. And though I have been innocent in the world, since men have called me 'God', and 'Son of God', God, in order that I be not mocked of the demons on the day of judgement, hath willed that I be mocked of men in this world by the death of Judas, making all men to believe that I died upon the cross. And this mocking shall continue until the advent of Mohammed, the messenger of God, who, when he shall come, shall reveal this deception to those who believe in God's law'.²⁴⁹

The above verses reflect Muslim belief with regard to the destiny of Jesus. That is to say, the Muslim denies that Jesus died on the cross. He thus necessarily rejects the resurrection of Christ, though he does believe that Jesus ascended into heaven, and that he will come again and die. Yet, there is really so little Quranic evidence to support

his contention a contention which contradicts the clear testimony of the New Testament and even of the secular historians of that age. Probably the only passage in the Qur'ān related to the denial of the death of Jesus on the cross is as follows:

...That they said (in boast) 'We killed Christ Jesus the son of Mary, the Apostle of God'. But they killed him not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them (*wa lakīn shubbiha lahum*). And those who differ, therein are full of doubts, with no certain knowledge, but only conjecture to follow, for of a surety they killed him not; Nay, God raised him up unto Himself, and God is exalted in Power, Wise; and there is none of the People of the Book but must believe in him before his death, and on the Day of Judgement he will be a witness against them.²⁵⁰

Some Muslim exegetes²⁵¹ interpreted the words shubbiha lahum as a reference to the person who assumed Jesus' likeness (shabah) and died in his place. The substitutionist theory as rehearsed in the Gospel of Barnabas coincides with Islamic teaching of the Middle Ages and is based on Qur'ān 4:157-159, as cited above. Gradually, the idea of mandatory substitution with regard to the victim who changed places with Jesus was considered by Muslims to be morally unacceptable. Indeed, different Muslim polemicists portrayed the substitute by a variety of names, and within different settings.²⁵² But the accounts which showed the substitute suffering voluntarily were the most acceptable. The author of the Gospel of Barnabas is unaware of the moral dilemma inherent in his portrayal of Judas as one dragooned into the rôle of a substitute in Jesus' stead. In this regard, Gairdner comments?

...'Barnabas' boldly provides the details of the event and the person (Judas Iscariot) whom he portrays as crucified in the place of Jesus - and that in a manner which would probably embarrass some Muslims.²⁵³

Does this mean that the author of the Gospel in question was familiar only with, and dominated by, Islamic notions of the Middle Ages which depicted Jesus' substitute being enforced to accept the consequences of Jesus' ministry? If so, does this imply that the Gospel of Barnabas is medieval? In any event, the Muslim theories of substitution, with regard to Jesus, represent an attempt by Muslim polemicists to harmonise the New Testament accounts of the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus with the Quranic understanding of prophethood. In this connection, Cragg states:

...there was, for the Qur'ān, a compelling reason - Christology apart - why Jesus should be preserved from ignominy and real death, namely, the credibility and authenticity of his prophetic role. If he were truly to have suffered and died, God must be understood to have deserted him and his whole status would thereby have been disowned.²⁵⁴

This understanding of the prophetic rôle dominates the Gospel of Barnabas. Yet, even the Qur'ān²⁵⁵ itself bears witness several times to the fact that God's prophets suffered and died at the hands of their enemies. Why, then, this strange escape of Jesus. Qur'ān 4:157, as cited above, is open to interpretation. Thus, the well known Egyptian doctor and writer, Muhammad Kamel Hussein, states:

...the idea of a substitute for Christ is a very crude way of explaining the Quranic text. They had to explain a lot to the masses. No cultured Muslim believes in this nowadays. The text is taken to mean that the Jews thought they killed Christ but God raised him unto Him in a way we can leave unexplained among the several mysteries we have taken for granted on faith alone.²⁵⁶

Similarly, the Christian scholar, E.E. Elder, commenting on Qur'ān 4:157, states:

...a free translation of shubbiha lahum (he was made to resemble another for them) could be 'it was made a misunderstanding - a perplexity to them'. In that case, the verse could then be properly translated as 'Yet they slew him not, and they crucified him not - but it (His Crucifixion) was made a misunderstanding to them'. Jesus' Crucifixion perplexed them; they saw the event, but failed to appreciate its inner meaning.²⁵⁷

If Qur'ān 4:157 is interpreted as being an affirmation of the crucifixion of Jesus, then it follows that Jesus' choice to reject the power-structure, in favour of accepting the consequences of his ministry passively, can find Quranic endorsement. However, according to the Gospel of Barnabas, Jesus escapes death in order to foretell the advent of Muḥammad. In short, the author of the said Gospel is content to rehearse Islamic notions prevalent in the Middle Ages with regard to the destiny of Jesus. Hence Slomp states:

...the overall intention and general theme of the Gospel of Barnabas consists in an effort to present a gospel which meets the requirements of Muslim apologetics.²⁵⁸

Furthermore, the Gospel of Barnabas contains references which cannot be reconciled with the first century of the Christian era. For one thing, the Gospel of Barnabas refers to soldiers in the temple rolling casks of wood or barrels which are rolled 'when they are washed to refill them with wine'.²⁵⁹ The Old Testament contains a few references to barrels, but in each case the reference is to an earthen jar (kad) used for storing meal or water.²⁶⁰ In New Testament times wine was stored in goatskin bottles.²⁶¹ Wooden barrels were invented in Gaul²⁶² and any reference to the same is, according to Gairdner, 'more suggestive of Italy than of Oriental lands'.²⁶³ Indeed, the influence of Italy is also evident from the odd size of the Gospel of Barnabas, namely, its 222 chapters. Accordingly, Slomp states:

...The Italian text was modelled after the Tuscan and Venetian diatessarons or gospel-harmonies. These 13th and 14th century harmonies were widely used in Italy.²⁶⁴

Moreover, the Biblical Barnabas lived in the first century of the Christian era, and was an early convert to Christianity. He was a seasoned traveller and one familiar with the geography of the land where Jesus performed his earthly ministry. Yet, the author of the Gospel of Barnabas is guilty of substantial geographical errors. For example, the said author comments:

...And Jesus went to the sea of Galilee and boarded a boat travelling to Nazareth, his own town. There was a great storm and the boat was about to sink.²⁶⁵

It is well known that Nazareth is not a coastal town, but is situated some fifteen miles south-west of the sea of Galilee. Besides, the author in question concludes the narrative of the storm as follows:

...Having arrived at the city of Nazareth the seamen spread through all the city all that Jesus had wrought.²⁶⁶

It is clear, therefore, that for the author under review Nazareth is a seaport town. Thus, in the light of the foregoing evidence it is impossible to ascribe a pre-medieval date to the Gospel of Barnabas. Moreover, Slomp considers that:

...Even if we accept that this one extant manuscript is a copy of an older text and not the autograph of the author then the original cannot be much older. There are several clear indications (linguistic, Dante etc) for the opinion that not a long period lapsed between the conception and writing by the author and this manuscript.²⁶⁷

Can we ascertain the identity of the author of the Gospel of Barnabas? The original manuscript of this Gospel, to which reference has already been made, was allegedly discovered by Fra (Friar) Marino during the pontificate of Pope Sixtus V (1585 to 1590). Lonsdale and Laura Ragg searched the Venetian archives for information in respect of Fra Marino. Accordingly, they state:

...The name Marino, Marini, figures very frequently in Venetian annals; but the only contemporary friar of that name whom we have noted is a certain Maestro Marino dell' ordine di S. Francesco, who was responsible for an Index of prohibited books published in 1549.²⁶⁸

The identification of Fra Marino with a list of prohibited books finds an echo in Jomier's theory, as cited earlier, with regard to a forger finding inspiration from the Pseudo-Gelasian Decrees for the title, The Gospel of Barnabas. This, however, suggests that Fra Marino was the author. Is there any evidence to support this claim? Towards the end of the sixteenth century both Jews and Muslims in Italy and Spain were exposed to the inquisition.²⁶⁹ The Christian inquisitors went round the country encouraging those guilty of heresy to repent and embrace orthodox Christianity. Many of these inquisitors were members of the mendicant orders, namely, Dominicans and Franciscans. The Franciscan friar Fra Felice Peretti da Montalto (later Pope Sixtus V) was inquisitor in Venice in the decade 1558 to 1568.²⁷⁰ According to the Spanish preface of the Gospel of Barnabas, Fra Marino was intimate with Pope Sixtus V (1585 to 1590). Indeed, the said pontiff built the Lateran Palace and the Vatican Library. Slomp thinks that Fra Marino was originally a young Jew who was forced to embrace Christianity when da Montalto (later Pope Sixtus V) was in charge of the inquisition of Venice.²⁷¹ Slomp suggests that Fra Marino later converted to Islam and with a basic knowledge of Christian theology, and an insufficient knowledge of the Qur'ân, composed the Gospel of Barnabas.²⁷² Hence, Slomp

states:

...As a Jew there was one thing he did not want to give up, his messianic expectations. So he attributes the title Messiah to the great hero of his new faith Muḥammad.²⁷³

Further, Slomp argues that:

...the Franciscan friar Fra Marino of the preface to the Spanish edition tried to take revenge upon the former inquisitor in Venice by recounting the finding of the gospel of Barnabas in the papal library.²⁷⁴

All in all, the above suggestions appear to be legitimate and in keeping with the external and internal evidence afforded by the Gospel of Barnabas. In short, the said Gospel was written as a revenge.

To sum up, it is evident from the preceding paragraphs that the Gospel of Barnabas was possibly written at the end of the sixteenth century. Perhaps this Gospel should be seen as an earnest, though vengeful, attempt by a Jewish-Christian convert to Islam to show, from the Muslim perspective, that Muḥammad is superior to Jesus. Nonetheless, it is a crude forgery, and it contradicts the Bible, the Qur'ān and the teachings of Islam. It is clear that the author in question corrupted, by ignorance and intent, the sacred scriptures of Christianity and Islam in an effort to enhance the status of Muḥammad. Or, to put it another way, the said author, in a radical bid to elevate Muḥammad, was content to adapt any source material, written or oral, in order to propagate his pre-conceived ideas about Muḥammad as 'Messiah'. But the Gospel of Barnabas neither proves or disproves the Muslim claims with regard to Muḥammad as 'the messenger or God'. At best, it merely rehearses Muslim notions about the rôle and destiny of Jesus in relation to the so-called superior personage of Muḥammad.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE THEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF MUHAMMAD'S LIFE AND MINISTRY FOR CHRISTIANS

Section 4.1: Jesus and Muhammad: Messengers of God; Bearers of Revelation?

There is little information in respect of Jesus in non-Christian literature. The Roman historian, Suetonius (117-138), in his Life of Claudius refers, in all probability, to Jesus when he relates that Claudius expelled the Jews from Rome because of their 'continued quarrelling at the instigation of Chrestus'.¹ Another Roman historian, Tacitus (c. 55-120), describing the persecution of Christians by Nero after the great fire in Rome, states that 'Christ from whom they took their name had been put to death in the reign of Tiberius by the procurator Pontius Pilate'.² Further, the governor of Bithynia, Pliny the younger, in his famous letter (c. 112) to the Emperor Trajan, shows how widely Christianity had spread in Bithynia, but tells us nothing of Jesus except that hymns were 'sung to him as God'.³ The Jewish historian, Josephus (c. 37 - c. 100), in his Antiquities of the Jews (c. 94) refers to Jesus as:

...a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works...He was the Christ; and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him, for he appeared to them alive again the third day.⁴

However, the genuineness of the above paragraph is by no means certain. That is, the passage in question may have been edited in a pro-Christian way.⁵ In any case, all of the above-cited references, though they are valuable for their independent confirmation of Jesus' life, death and following, do not tell us very much. For the Christian, the scriptures

preserved by the church in the New Testament provide the principle source material with regard to Jesus. The Christian calendar dates from the sixth century A.D. when Dionysius (c. 500- 550), a Scythian monk who lived in Rome, dated, wrongly, the birth of Jesus from the foundation of the city of Rome. Dionysius took this date as 753 B.C. and called the following year A.D. 1.⁶ The Christian era as now dated is at least four to seven years too short. According to St. Matthew's Gospel⁷, Jesus was born during the reign of Herod the Great and Herod died in the year Christians call 4 B.C. With no reason to doubt this assertion, one is still left with a large margin of possibility. Yet, Luke⁸ portrays Jesus' birth as being contemporary with a Roman census begun in 12 B.C. by the Roman legate in Syria, Publius Sulpicius Quirinius. It seems that this census did not start in Palestine until the year 7 B.C.⁹ Thus, Jesus was probably born between 4 B.C. and 7 B.C. It is impossible to be more specific. As has been pointed out, Muḥammad was probably born between 570 and 582; there is, therefore, the best part of six centuries separating Jesus and Muḥammad.

Jesus, according to Matthew¹⁰ and Luke¹¹, was born at Bethlehem in Judaea and grew up at Nazareth under the care of his mother Mary, and his reputed foster-father, Joseph. Both of the above evangelists stress that Mary was betrothed to Joseph at the time of Jesus' birth, but both emphasize her virginity.¹² The notion of the virginal conception of Jesus may be legendary rather than historical. Hence, according to the Hanson brothers:

...it is not by any means certain that Luke and Matthew, when they give us their accounts of Jesus' birth, mean to supply us with an explanation of how he was both God and man. Such an idea is really anachronistic. It is more likely that they each want to emphasize that in Jesus there was a new creation (as Paul says in 2 Cor. 5:17).¹³

This understanding of the virginal conception of Jesus finds a definite echo in the Qur'ān where Jesus' birth of a virgin is portrayed as being 'a Sign unto men and a Mercy from Us'¹⁴, and easier to understand than the creation of Adam, who had neither father or mother.¹⁵ Therefore, for Christians and Muslims alike, the notion of Jesus being conceived without the intervention of male seed does not, in itself, provide absolute proof of the superiority of Jesus over Muḥammad. It seems that Jesus was one of a rather large family, having four brothers, James, Joses, Judas and Simon, besides sisters.¹⁶ Mark, via his Gospel, portrays Jesus as 'the carpenter' (tektōn).¹⁷ Yet, it is not certain whether this is a tradition or merely a conjecture.¹⁸ Moreover, with regard to Jesus' education, The Jewish Encyclopedia states:

...It is doubtful whether he received any definite intellectual training, the great system of Jewish education not being carried into effect till after the destruction of Jerusalem (A.D. 70). It is probable, however, that he could read; he was certainly acquainted, either by reading or by oral instruction, with much of the Old Testament.¹⁹

Therefore, it is probable that Jesus, like Muḥammad, was literate. However, Jesus, unlike Muḥammad, was familiar with the Hebrew scriptures.

Jesus grew up in Galilee and remained there for the greater part of his life. Jesus, in contrast to Muḥammad, had little opportunity to travel far beyond the confines of his own environment. What was the nature of Jesus' religion? Vermes refers to the 'overwhelming Jewishness'²⁰ of Galilee during the days of Jesus. Judaism is the religion of the Jewish people. Still, according to the Jewish scholar, Alan Unterman:

...Traditionally Judaism did not conceive of itself as a religion, it saw itself as the teachings and commandments consequential to the

covenanted relationship between God and Israel.²¹

The formation of the Jewish people, which may be traced back to the Exodus of the Hebrews from Egypt and retrospectively to the patriarch Abraham, is closely connected with a divine revelation, and with the commitment of the people to obedience to God's will. Over its long history of three thousand years, Judaism has its roots in the Hebrew Bible. This collection of writings was written over a period of approximately one thousand years and assumed its final form at the end of the first century A.D. As the Biblical writings were created over a long period they therefore reflect a variety of ideas and assumptions. The Hebrew Bible moves from a limited view of God as a national deity to a more universal conception of him as the one God of all nations. Accordingly, this progression of thought is reflected via the several names of God which occur in the Hebrew Bible. For example, according to Genesis²², God is designated as El Shaddai (The Mountain One)²³ when he made a covenant with Abraham. In Exodus²⁴ the God who was known to the patriarchs as El Shaddai²⁵ now revealed to Moses His name Yahweh. Anderson, commenting on the possible meaning of the name Yahweh, states:

...Probably an important clue is provided in Exodus 3:13, where the name is associated with the verb 'to be': 'I AM WHO I AM (or, as in R.S.V. footnote, 'I WILL BE, WHAT I WILL BE'). What is meant by the verb 'to be' is not bare existence, but existence manifested in activity.²⁶

Furthermore, Judaism is a monotheistic religion, for it has its origin in the command to worship the one God.²⁷ Likewise, both Christianity and Islam embrace the notion of monotheism. Indeed, one of the most important messages given to Muḥammad was of the oneness of God.²⁸ All in all, the God (Yahweh) of the Hebrew Bible is both a remote, transcendent

being, imposing his awe upon the universe, and also a loving and compassionate father who has a close personal relationship with those who revere him.²⁹ Similarly, in the Qur'ān the transcendence³⁰, immanence³¹ and love of God³² are clearly asserted. However, the Jewish notion of the fatherhood of God can find no echo in Islam. Commenting on the Islamic understanding of the immanence of God, Cragg states:

...the 'nearness' is that of vigilant watchfulness, before which nothing is concealed, so that God 'knows what man's soul whispers within him'. That unfailing awareness in God of every secret of the heart scrutinizes us closely and inescapably...It is not understood as a divine engagement with our sorrows and our yearnings. Rather it is a divine reckoning with our duties.³³

Such a radical monotheism as presented by Islam is at variance with the Hebrew concept of the nature of God. Accordingly, the Jewish scholar, Abraham Heschel, comments:

...What obtains between God and Israel must be understood, not as a legal, but as a personal relationship, as participation, involvement, tension. God's life interacts with the life of the people.³⁴

This understanding of God's involvement with mankind would appear to compromise Islamic monotheism with its insistence that God cannot come into association or connection with anything else whatsoever. Therefore, the Hebrew Bible possesses an understanding of monotheism which is conceptually at variance with Islamic monotheism.

The religion of the Hebrews was expressed via ritualistic animal sacrifices and offerings of other kinds offered by the priests. Also, to counteract the insincere practice of Hebrew ritual, the Hebrew prophets claimed to be called by God to preach His message. Following the return of the

Hebrew captives from Babylon (beginning 538 B.C.), the formation of the Jewish state was largely the work of Nehemiah and Ezra. Originally the term Jew denoted one belonging to the tribe of Judah or to the two tribes of the Southern Kingdom³⁵, but later its meaning was extended, and it was applied to anyone of the Hebrew race who returned from Babylon. In time, the said term came finally to comprehend all of the Hebrew race throughout the world.³⁶ The period from the completion of the Hebrew Bible (c. 150 B.C.) to the compilation of the Mishnah³⁷ (200 A.D.) was one of transition in the history of Judaism. During the first half of this period Judaism was a fragmented system. Thus, the Jewish scholar, Jacob Neusner, states:

...During the period just before the destruction of the Temple, the period when Jesus lived, there was no such thing as 'normative Judaism'... Judaism was full of vitality, but in the end it was without a clear and widely accepted view of what was required of each individual, apart from acceptance of Mosaic revelation. And this could mean whatever you wanted. People would ask one teacher after another, 'What must I do to enter the kingdom of heaven?' precisely because no authoritative answer existed.³⁸

Both Jesus himself and the small group of disciples who followed him during his ministry in Galilee and Judaea were all Jews by race and religion. In the Jordan Valley the rite of baptism was common among reformist Jewish sects. It is reasonably certain that Jesus was baptised by John the Baptist. Macquarrie, commenting on Jesus' baptism, states:

...the very fact that this was 'a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins' (LK 3:3) made it embarrassing for the disciples of a later time to explain why Jesus should have been baptized...But the simple fact, whatever its original significance may have been, has been transposed into a mythico-theological framework, and the incident is used to light up Jesus in depth as the Christ of God. The Holy Spirit descends upon him, and a voice from heaven attests his divine Sonship.³⁹

With the advent of the notion of the divinity of Jesus, the fact of Jesus' baptism was incorporated into an appropriate theological framework to show, from the Christian perspective, the superiority of Jesus over John the Baptist. Thus, this elaboration of the story of the baptism of Jesus is subjected to the Christian viewpoint with regard to the divine sonship of Jesus. Still, the willingness of Jesus to undergo baptism is perhaps indicative of his humanness and reliance upon God. Such sentiments are parallel to the Quranic portrayal of Jesus as being 'no more than a Messenger of God'.⁴⁰ Further, the initial tradition of Jesus' baptism appears to contradict early Christian teachings about the sinlessness of Jesus. For instance, the letter to the Hebrews portrays Jesus as 'one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin'.⁴¹ Likewise, according to the Qur'ān⁴² and Muslim tradition⁴³, Jesus is considered to be free from sin. Muslims believe that Muḥammad was a sinless man, but one of his wives, Umm Salmah, did not believe this to be the case. Shortly before Muḥammad's death Umm Salmah reassured him with the words 'as all thy sins are forgiven, why weepest thou?'⁴⁴ Does this mean that Muḥammad, because of his sins, is inferior to Jesus who is considered by both Christians and Muslims to be sinless? The notion of the sinlessness of Jesus is open to interpretation. For one thing, it is possible that Jesus did not indulge in deliberate sinful acts. Nonetheless, he advocated that taxes should be paid to the Roman authorities and, thereby, he was associated with the corporate sins of Roman rule.⁴⁵ How, then, should we understand Jesus' sinlessness? From the Christian standpoint, Macquarrie comments:

...Sin may be briefly described as alienation from God. Anyone born into human society is bound to know this alienation...Surely Jesus too must have known this distance from God as he grew up in ancient Palestine. His 'sinlessness', in spite of the negative formation of the word, consisted in his highly affirmative overcoming of the distance, his deepening union with the Father

through the deeds and decisions of his life, in which he overcame sin.⁴⁶

In contrast to the Christian belief in original sin, there is for the Muslim no fundamental disordering in human nature. Christians contend that Jesus achieved an intimate and filial relationship with God. Muḥammad, on the other hand, espoused a stark monotheism which overcomes alienation from God by the concept of prophethood via submission to the message imparted, namely, the Qur'ān. But the idea of Jesus' 'sinlessness' as overcoming alienation from God is in principle similar to Muḥammad's experience through his gradual and deepening awareness of the voice of God and the will of God. Therefore, Jesus' baptism, in its initial stage, may be seen as a human response to the divine will which can find an echo in Muḥammad's human response to his call to prophethood.

After his baptism Jesus began a ministry in Galilee. How long he ministered there is uncertain.⁴⁷ In any event, Jesus' ministry created considerable attention, a sizable following, and much animosity. According to Mark, Jesus posed the following question to his disciples:

...'Who do men say that I am?' And they told him, 'John the Baptist; and others say Elijah; and others one of the prophets'. And he asked them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Peter answered him, 'You are the Christ'. And he charged them to tell no one about him.⁴⁸

Peter's confession 'You are the Christ' (i.e. Christos, the anointed, the equivalent in Greek of the Hebrew Messiah) is ambiguous. From the time of the Maccabees (168 B.C.) until the Christian era Palestinian Judaism was host to a wide range of Messianic notions.⁴⁹ In ancient Israel the idea of Messiahship was connected with the eschatological hope of Israel in terms of kingship. Thus, the Messianic hope would find fulfilment via the restoration of the Davidic kingdom.

In Jesus' day there was a general expectation of the coming of a Messiah who would free the Jews from the hated rule of the Romans and usher in the rule (or kingdom) of God. How, then, can we equate Jesus with this general understanding of Messiahship? Firstly, Casey comments on this point as follows:

... 'the messiah' was not a title in Second Temple Judaism, and the term 'messiah' or 'anointed' on its own was not specific enough to refer to the messianic son of David, nor indeed, to any single individual at all.⁵⁰

Hence, it is probable that Jesus never used the term 'the Messiah' in relation to himself. Indeed Casey may well be correct when he comments:

... Peter cannot have said 'You are the Anointed' as a major confession of Jesus' position because the term 'the Anointed' was not specific enough to be used in such a confession.⁵¹

The implication of this assertion points to the early church as the means whereby Jesus was formally equated with the notion of Messiahship. It is entirely possible that Jesus did not identify himself with the popular Messianic notions of his day. It appears that Messianic hopes were projected unto the earthly Jesus by some of his followers, but such hopes were not realised.⁵²

In the wake of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, as understood by Christians, the notion of Jesus' Messiahship had to be radically re-interpreted. That is to say, the idea of a suffering Messiah, though not unknown within Judaism⁵³, was contrary, in Cullmann's opinion, to 'the mainstream of contemporary messianism'.⁵⁴ It is possible that Jesus re-interpreted the general understanding of Messiahship in order to accommodate the concept of suffering.⁵⁵ In any event, the early church accepted the notion of Jesus as a suffering

Messiah in terms of the 'suffering servant' as portrayed by deutero-Isaiah.⁵⁶ The Qur'ān, in a completely non-descript way, calls Jesus 'the Messiah' (al-masīh).⁵⁷ The Quranic use of this term is not associated with the concept of a suffering Messiah. On the contrary, the Quranic portrayal of Jesus as 'the Messiah' (al-masīh) is placed firmly within the Islamic understanding of prophethood which ends with Muḥammad. In short, the Jesus of the Qur'ān is fully human. Similarly, the early Christian understanding of Jesus' Messiahship was accommodated within the humanness of Jesus. Hence, Macquarrie comments:

...although the messiah, as God's anointed, would certainly be a highly exalted being, he was also understood as fully human, and the original use of the title did not imply the kind of relation of Jesus to the Father which developed in later belief.⁵⁸

Thus, the bare concept of Messiahship is not, in itself, indicative of the superiority of Jesus over Muḥammad. Nevertheless, when Jesus' willingness to face the consequences of his ministry passively is interpreted in terms of suffering Messiahship this provides a sharp contrast to Muḥammad's use of the power-structure in his quest to propagate Islam. Cragg's uneasiness with the use of the force-factor within religion is expressed as follows:

...The 'security' it may physically provide, it may spiritually undermine. Successful enterprises attract time-servers. The power that sanctions truth inspires deception. The force that dispels the fears of disciples arouses the fears of outsiders and may indirectly dispose them to conform...Such is the descending spiral of unworthiness to which religion with the power-equation is prone.⁵⁹

The above remarks tend to imply that the concept of Jesus as a suffering Messiah represents the way of ultimate truth, whereas Muḥammad's use of force may have created certain consequences which have no origin in God.

Next, according to Muslims, Muḥammad was most certainly a prophet who, in continuity with such prophets as Abraham, Moses, Jesus and many others, declared the original religion imparted by God to Abraham. The Qur'ān exhorts Muḥammad to:

...Say: 'Verily I am sent unto you from Him to warn and to bring glad tidings'; and to preach thus, 'Seek ye the forgiveness of your Lord, and turn to Him in repentance'...⁶⁰

Abraham is a significant figure in the Old Testament where his monotheism amid idolatry is clearly visible.⁶¹ In the New Testament Abraham is revered as the ancestor of Israel.⁶² Casey asserts that Jesus 'was called by God to bring back the people of Israel to the Lord'.⁶³ According to Mark, Jesus commenced his ministry with the following exhortation:

...The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel.⁶⁴

Thus, Jesus, like Muḥammad, was engaged in a mission to exhort the penitent to return to God. In Islam the concept of repentance is characterised by a change of heart and life in each penitent individual.⁶⁵ Similarly, within Christianity repentance may be broadly defined as a resolute turning away from sin. Yet, Jesus' exhortation to his hearers' to repent is, according to Dunn:

...something radical, a complete turn round of the basic direction of his hearers' lives and attitudes, is clearly indicated...perhaps above all in his demand that would be followers convert and become like children.⁶⁶

Therefore, the notion of repentance, though common to both Christianity and Islam, is in Christianity a much more radical concept than in Islam.

Further, Islam links repentance with belief in God as a prerequisite to forgiveness.⁶⁷ So, too, in the above-cited extract from Mark's Gospel Jesus exhorts people to 'repent, and believe in the Gospel'. Furthermore, Jesus, via the parable of the Prodigal Son⁶⁸, portrays God as an earthly father willing to receive his penitent son by immediate forgiveness. The idea of the fatherhood of God is alien to Islam's stark monotheism, but the notion of God receiving the penitent, and the thought of God repenting toward sinners, is present in the Qur'ān.⁶⁹ Moreover, the Qur'ān clearly asserts that forgiveness is an exercise of the divine right.⁷⁰ Similarly, the Jesus of the New Testament proclaims the unaccountable and unexpected generosity of God via the parable of the vineyard owner.⁷¹ But, all of this having been said, Christians argue that Jesus' promise of forgiveness of sins was not only an eschatological hope, but a present reality. For example, with regard to Jesus healing a paralytic, Mark records:

...And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, 'My son, your sins are forgiven'. Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, 'Why does this man speak thus? It is blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?' And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, 'Why do you question thus in your hearts?

Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven', or to say, 'Rise, take up your pallet and walk?' But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins - he said to the paralytic - 'I say to you, rise, take up your pallet and go home'. And he rose, and immediately took up the pallet and went out before them all'.⁷²

As has been pointed out in the second chapter of this thesis, Jesus' ability to perform miracles of healing does not provide sufficient evidence in order to elevate Jesus over Muḥammad. However, the above healing story is complex.

First, Jesus' pronouncement that the paralytic's 'sins are forgiven' appears to introduce a new concept into the Jewish understanding of forgiveness. In Jesus' day Judaism held that true repentance was necessary in order to receive divine forgiveness. The incident in question appears to show Jesus side-stepping the notion of repentance and pronouncing the actual forgiveness of a person. A fragment from the Dead Sea Scrolls known as the 'Prayer of Nabonidus' shows that a Jew pardoned the sins of another man. This fragment states:

...I was afflicted with an evil ulcer for seven years...and a gazer pardoned my sins. He was a Jew from among the children of Judah and he said: 'Recount this in writing to glorify and exalt the name of the Most High God'.⁷³

The one who received healing and forgiveness may have been king Nebuchadnezzar as mentioned in the Book of Daniel.⁷⁴ In any event, Vermes considers the above fragment to be:

...valuable in that it sheds fresh light on the controversial Gospel episode of the healing of the paralytic. Considered side by side with the Nabonidus story, there is nothing outstandingly novel or unique in the words of Jesus, 'My son, your sins are forgiven'. The scribes think that they are blasphemous, but for Jesus - as for the author of the Qumran fragment - the phrase 'to forgive sins' was synonymous with 'to heal', and he clearly used it in that sense...The words are not disrespectful of God, nor do they imply that the speaker claimed for himself divine status. The main reason for the scandal of the scribes must have been that their legal language was very different from that of Jesus.⁷⁵

Vermes' thesis that Jesus' claim to forgive sins is not unique is interesting and, in the light of the Nabonidus story, entirely plausible. Nonetheless, Jesus' utterance about the forgiveness of sins is linked with the title 'Son of man'. In the Old Testament the phrase 'Son of man' is an old Jewish idiom meaning simply 'man'.⁷⁶ In later Judaism⁷⁷, however, it came to be a special term for a heavenly being

coming on the clouds of heaven to deliver the righteous from the hands of their enemies.⁷⁸ This hope relating to the Son of man as judge of the world is accommodated within the Christian understanding of Jesus' passion, death and resurrection, as presented by Mark.⁷⁹ Vermes may be correct in his assertion that Jesus' claim to forgive the sins of a sick man was by no means unique within Judaism. Still, when Jesus is identified with the concept of the Son of man, such as identification may be indicative of the unique authority of Jesus.

Next, Luke portrays Jesus responding to a sinful woman in the house of Simon the Pharisee.⁸⁰ According to Luke, Jesus states:

...Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little. And he said to her, 'Your sins are forgiven'. Then those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, 'Who is this, who even forgives sins?' And he said to the woman, 'Your faith has saved you; go in peace'.⁸¹

This incident is in no way connected with healing. Jesus pronounced the woman's sins forgiven as a result of her love which in turn was motivated by repentance and faith. Accordingly, Vermes' contention that the pronouncement of sins forgiven, when linked with healing, was not unique within Judaism is not applicable to the incident under review. It would seem, therefore, that Jesus' words which convey forgiveness are unique. Thus, Kümmel states:

...Jesus brings God's forgiveness and causes the forgiving intention on the part of the Father who seeks the sinner to become an experienced reality...Although God's rule remains in the future and man still expectantly moves toward the divine decision and God's salvation, the person who in Jesus' teaching and actions sees God's saving action becoming a reality now, in the person of Jesus, encounters the God who wills to give us his eschatological gifts of salvation.⁸²

It is becoming clear that the New Testament portrayal of the mission and person of Jesus is significantly at variance with the Islamic understanding of Muḥammad's rôle as the messenger of God. For instance, Jesus' teaching about repentance is much more radical than the same concept within Islam. Moreover, Jesus' claim to forgive sins and his association with the idea of the Son of man, are, from the Muslim perspective, bordering on shirk which is to associate anything or anyone with God. Further, the identification of Jesus, as the Son of man, with suffering, death and resurrection provides another dimension to his ministry which can find no parallel in the ministry of Muḥammad. Also, Jesus proclaimed forgiveness of sins as a present reality in the lives of men. Whereas, according to Sweetman, in Islam:

...Forgiveness is for the most part conceived eschatologically. The Last Day will make it plain whether a man has been forgiven or not...⁸³

Thus, Jesus, when contrasted with Muḥammad, is much more authoritative in his teaching about forgiveness. Jesus' teaching possesses a definite note of authority, and his proclamation about the Kingdom of God provides the framework whereby his message and his person become one. Or, to put it another way, the divine message conveyed by Jesus was expressed verbally, and via his person. This notion of the association of message and messenger is repudiated by Islam on the grounds that it would compromise the divine unity.

It is not surprising that, when Jesus exercised his brief ministry in Galilee and Judaea, the people took it for granted that he stood in the ancient and familiar lineage of the prophets of the Lord.⁸⁴ The Qur'ān, too, portrays Jesus as a prophet.⁸⁵ Thus, was Jesus a prophet? The New Testament is silent with regard to the marital status of Jesus. In other words, there is no suggestion in the Gospels that Jesus was married. Vermes considers that this state of

affairs is:

...sufficiently unusual in ancient Jewry to prompt further enquiry, for the Hebrew Bible, though it prescribes temporary sexual abstinence in certain circumstances, never orders a life of total celibacy.⁸⁶

If we assume that Jesus embraced a life of celibacy, this assumption stands in sharp contrast, not only to ancient Jewish practice, but to Muḥammad's monogamous relationship with Khadījah and his subsequent polygamous relationships. Hence, is there any theological significance in the assumed celibacy of Jesus? According to the Talmud⁸⁷, Moses freely renounced all sexual relations with his wife in order that he might be fully consecrated to the prophetic ministry. In the light of Moses' theologically motivated celibacy Vermes contends that:

...Jesus' apparent voluntary embrace of celibacy, at any rate from the time of his reception of the holy spirit, becomes historically meaningful.⁸⁸

Therefore, it is probable that Jesus considered himself to be in continuity with the historical ministry of Moses. The Qur'ān portrays Jesus and Muḥammad as prophets within the divine prophetic tradition. It has been noted that Jesus spoke with authority. Prophets also spoke with authority; do we need to go beyond the concept of prophethood to explain Jesus? Jesus' authority was not that of the derivative kind drawn from the Torah, neither did he, as did many rabbis of his time, parrot the teaching of someone greater like Rabbi Hillel. In Matthew⁸⁹, the most Jewish of the Gospels, we find Jesus contradicting the traditions of the Fathers and deepening⁹⁰ the teaching of Moses. The emphatic, 'You have heard that it was said...But I say unto you', must have been astonishing to Jews brought up under the Torah. In this connection, Cragg states:

...The note of 'But I say to you...' - is to be understood, not as some external arbitrary assertiveness, but as the authentic assurance in Jesus of the kingdom's reality within his sense of mission... 'Prophet' is certainly a term which the Gospels readily and proudly apply to Jesus in the context of his ministry... Yet, authentic as the title was it was transcended in a larger significance not adequately denoted if the 'prophetic' has to do simply with a verbal task, the passing on of a message.

...To borrow here the Qur'ān's term, al-balāgh, or 'communication', one has to move beyond the bare delivery of words into what the whole 'person' of the messenger signifies. Does not this happen to a degree in Islam itself where the rise of Tradition and the inclusive role of Muḥammad within Muslim devotion demonstrate the deep import of personhood alongside the spoken balāgh? Truth via a spokesman deepens into truth in personhood. It is very much so with the greatest of the Hebrew prophets, notably Amos, Hosea and Jeremiah. The impact belongs more ultimately with the man saying it than with the thing said.⁹¹

Hence, Jesus stands within the prophetic tradition proclaiming the will of God, but the notion of the message and the messenger becoming one, as is partially evident via the respective ministries of Amos, Hosea and Jeremiah, comes to fulfilment in the ministry of Jesus. Consequently, Jesus provides a deeper dimension to prophethood which transcends the Quranic belief that all the prophets, including Muḥammad, are subservient to the message they proclaim. In Islam the message, not the messenger, is the supreme manifestation of God's will for mankind. Jesus, however, leaves the prophets far behind with his assurance and self-conscious authority. Even John the Baptist, the greatest of men and 'more than a prophet'⁹², was less than Jesus and one who prepared his way.⁹³ Pannenberg, commenting on this point, states:

...Jesus not only issued a call to repentance, but with full authority he granted to the men he met the salvation expected in the future. He was certain that in his activity the future

salvation of God's Kingdom had broken into the present time. This distinguishes Jesus basically from the Baptist as well as from all the prophets.⁹⁴

It is clear, therefore, that Jesus cannot be rightly understood with the designation of 'prophet'. The Islamic insistence with regard to Jesus and Muḥammad being fellow prophets within the long line of previous prophets cannot be substantiated in the light of the above evidence. In short, Jesus' sense of divine authority, as expressed via his message and person, can find no echo in Islam's stark monotheism which permits only the notion of verbal communication as the sole function of prophethood.

Furthermore, Jesus' use of the word Abba seems to lie at the heart of his sense of authority. Abba is an Aramaic word for a male parent; that is to say, it was an intimate form of address signifying a close bond between children and their fathers.⁹⁵ God is rarely addressed as Father in the Old Testament and there are only a few examples of it in Palestinian Judaism during the early Christian era. For example, the following story is told of the Hasid, Hanan, grandson of Honi the Circle-Drawer and first cousin of Abba Hilkiah, the charismatic rain-makers:

...When the world was in need of rain, the rabbis used to send school-children to him, who seized the train of his cloak and said to him, Abba, Abba, give us rain! He said to God: Lord of the universe, render a service to those who cannot distinguish between the Abba who gives rain and the Abba who does not.⁹⁶

Thus, the use of the term Abba is not unique to Jesus, but it is employed by him in a unique fashion. Jesus speaks to God as a child does to its father, expressing his trust and obedience to the Father's will in the context of a relationship which transcends all others. Hence, it may be said that Jesus expressed his relationship to God in terms of

sonship.

All four Gospels employ the designations 'the Son', or 'the Son of God' as Christological titles. These titles, however, are not original to the historical Jesus, rather, in Bornkamm's words, 'they received the form in which they appear in the tradition from the faith of the church'.⁹⁷ Nonetheless, even if the said titles are not contemporary with the historical Jesus, this does not invalidate Jesus' custom of addressing God as Abba with its inherent notion of sonship. In any case, Muslims regard it as blasphemy to call Jesus the Son of God. Most Muslims do not separate the Biblical idea of Jesus' sonship from some sort of sexual process. Christians too would agree that the idea of God having sexual intercourse with a woman is impossible and blasphemous. So, how can we understand the notion of Jesus' sonship? In the Bible, 'son' is a term expressing an intimate relationship with someone or something else; basically, it indicates origin⁹⁸, but it is also used to express close association or identification with persons or things.⁹⁹ With regard to the Christian idea of the sonship of Jesus, Cragg comments:

...it means that Christ is God in divine self-revelation, an activity that begets or generates a historical personality...Our faith in the divinity of Christ is not, as the Muslim has believed, an affront to God, an offence against the divine unity, the supreme doctrinal sin for Muslims. On the contrary, it is the genesis and the ground of our faith that the one living and eternal God has been self-revealed.¹⁰⁰

From the Christian viewpoint, Cragg's remarks represent an attempt to incorporate the notion of Jesus' sonship within the bounds of monotheism and, thereby, the uniqueness of Jesus is visible and indicative of a deeper dimension to the concept of communication between God and mankind. Elsewhere, Cragg continues this line of thought and states:

...What obtains for Islam in the Qur'an via Muhammad obtains for Christianity in Christhood via Jesus.¹⁰¹

Thus, it is assumed that both Christianity and Islam have their common origin in God. The radical monotheism espoused by the Qur'ān shaped Muḥammad's ministry to embrace verbal proclamation as the ultimate medium in order to convey the Word of God to man. In contrast, the Christian understanding of Jesus' sonship emanates from the totality of the Christ-event; or, to put it another way, in the light of Jesus' ministry, death and resurrection, the notion of sonship appears to supersede mere verbal proclamation of the Word of God. For example, Mark ascribes to Jesus the parable of the wicked tenants of the vineyard.¹⁰² This parable is really an allegory which uses the Old Testament picture of a vineyard¹⁰³ as a national symbol of Israel. First, this nation has been sent through the centuries a succession of servants in the Hebrew prophets, culminating in John the Baptist, all of whom have looked for the fruits of repentance and righteousness. Such sentiments are similar to the Muslim belief that God has sent prophets to every nation. Also, the Qur'ān confirms that prophets have been rejected¹⁰⁴ and slain.¹⁰⁵ However, the allegory in question equates the factors which led to the murder of the beloved son with Jesus' willingness to face the consequences of his mission passively. Jeremias believes that this allegory is authentic and can be traced back to the historical Jesus.¹⁰⁶

Moreover, one third of the Fourth Gospel is dedicated to the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus; and large portions of the Synoptic Gospels are also reserved for the last week of Jesus' life. The factors which led to Jesus' death on the cross are summed up by Cragg as follows:

...This final and inclusive encounter Jesus faced, in full loyalty to his own doctrines, not

rendering evil for evil, or countering hatred with guile. Out of it only the Cross could emerge if Jesus was not to unleash violence, appeal to force, or make himself a king. Either he would withhold his witness or incur its consequences...He chose to suffer. The Cross, as an event, is no artificial scheme. It is what happens when a love like Christ's encounters a world like Jerusalem.¹⁰⁷

Jesus' passive response to the consequences of his own doctrines stands in sharp contrast to Muhammad's use of the power-structure in his bid to ensure the survival and spread of Islam. Both responses may be deemed as being motivated by a concern for the divine will, but Jesus' willingness to face the cross enables others to experience a deeper theological reality which goes beyond the ministry and significance of Muhammad's prophethood. Cragg, commenting on the significance of the cross of Jesus, states:

...Here we find a quality of love that makes an end of evil because it freely takes all its consequences upon itself. In revenge and hatred evil is perpetuated. In pardon and long-suffering it finds its term. For those who will acknowledge their inclusion here, such redemption means a new beginning, where 'the old things have passed away'.¹⁰⁸

The Christian can appreciate that the Muslim may have difficulties in understanding the significance of Jesus' sonship. This, after all, is a matter of faith. But even the historical fact of the death of Jesus on the cross, as well as its theological implications, are rejected. Muslims claim that mankind does not need a saviour because the loving and merciful God is able to forgive sins if repentance is sincere. Indeed, from the Christian standpoint, such sentiments are entirely legitimate, but for Christians the cross of Christ demonstrates the love and mercy of God. Thus, Cragg comments:

...All lies within the love of God. To see this is to be preserved from all mistaken theories that conceive of Christ as somehow placating a propitiating God from without, as if God needed some persuasion to the forgiveness of sinners. No! Rather the suffering of Christ expresses the divine love already active toward sinful humanity. In every evil situation love must suffer.¹⁰⁹

Thus, the conclusion arrived at so far is that Jesus taught with supreme authority which can find no parallel in Muḥammad's ministry. Moreover, Jesus' sonship resulted in his choice to endure the cross and, consequently, the divine will, from the Christian perspective, is exposed via his life, death and resurrection. This exposure of the divine in Jesus provides a focal point for the spiritual needs and healing of mankind. The concept of Muḥammad's prophethood is of vital importance to a major section of humanity, but the Christ-event affords another dimension which deepens and transforms the divine in the prophetic experience.

Next, the notion of Jesus' sonship overlaps with the Fourth Gospel's designation of Jesus as 'the Word' (Logos).¹¹⁰ What does the author of the Fourth Gospel wish to convey about Jesus via the concept of 'the Word' (Logos)? Conzelmann, commenting on this point, states:

...The sense is simply: he himself - as the Incarnate One. The point is that the word is not detached from the person of the revealer so that it can be communicated as free content. It is based exclusively on his existence, and therefore cannot be taught and learnt as knowledge. Anyone who has the person, i.e. who believes in him, has salvation.¹¹¹

Hence, from the Christian viewpoint, the notion of Jesus as the Word of God gives expression to who God is, what He is like and what He does, so the Son proceeds from the Father.¹¹² For the author of the Fourth Gospel, to know Jesus the Son or the Word made flesh is to know the Father

because 'He who has seen me (Jesus) has seen the Father'.¹¹³ Likewise, for Muslims the Word of God is eternal. It is through His Word that God acts, creating and sustaining the universe and revealing His will. If one should refer to the Word of God among Muslims, they would naturally think of the Qur'ān. However, many of them realise that in the Qur'ān Jesus is spoken of as Word (kalimah).¹¹⁴ Even though they regard this Jesus as only a prophet, could not the Quranic portrayal of Jesus as Word be filled with the Biblical significance of the same expression? After-all, Cragg points out:

...Were the divine and the human in dissociation, there could be neither prophethood nor Muḥammad. It is not the fact of that relatedness which is in dispute between us, but only its form, its intensity, its Islamic reservations, or its Christian decisiveness. John believes that the divine Presence, for deeply divine reasons, is equatable with Jesus in his story. No Shirk is here and no forfeiture of unity. All this is what he means by 'the Word made flesh' and this, following him, is what Christians have meant by the Sonship of Jesus.¹¹⁵

There can be little doubt that both Jesus and Muḥammad were messengers of the one God and bearers of revelation, and each was involved with the divine will within the concept of monotheism. Yet, according to Cragg:

...the answer to the vexed question, 'Is the God of Islam and the God of the Gospel the same?' can only rightly be 'Yes!' and 'No!' Yes, as the common ground of all we say in partial unison: No, insofar as our convictions diverge.¹¹⁶

Accordingly, the respective ministries of Jesus and Muḥammad represent two different expressions of God's message to mankind. Jesus' willingness not to resist the hostility which his ministry evoked is diametrically opposed to Muḥammad's use of the power-structure in order to counteract the hostile consequences of his own ministry. All in all,

Jesus' passive response to opposition which, from the Christian perspective, resulted in his death and resurrection takes the notion of prophethood into the realm where the divine message conveyed by Jesus is mediated via his person. That is, in Dunn's words, 'the deity of Christ is God himself reaching out to man through Christ to offer his costly forgiveness'.¹¹⁷ Thus, the New Testament portrayal of Jesus, whilst rooted in monotheism, transcends the stark monotheism espoused by Muhammad.

Section 4.2: Jesus and Muhammad in Universal Perspective

Firstly, does the message which Jesus proclaimed via his ministry have universal significance? The contention of modern Christian scholars, as for example Hick, is that Jesus was 'by race a Jew'.¹¹⁸ Unterman, commenting on the universality of Judaism, states:

...On the one hand the Torah would seem to contain a message from God to man, a message admittedly mediated through Jewish prophets but of universal validity...The Judaism of the Roman Empire, before the rise of Christian hegemony, saw itself as a religion with a message to the gentile world.¹¹⁹

This universalistic element within Judaism is reflected in Jesus' condemnation of the Scribes and Pharisees as follows:

...Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you traverse sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves.¹²⁰

Thus, there was within first-century Judaism the policy of active proselytization which is indicative of the universalistic significance of Judaism as deemed by its adherents. Consequently, one would expect to find Jesus proclaiming the universal significance of his preaching. Admittedly, the Synoptic Gospels portray Jesus directing his preaching to 'He who has ears to hear, let him hear'.¹²¹ This exhortation might suggest that Jesus considered his message to be of universal importance. However, Matthew records Jesus' instructions to the twelve disciples as follows:

...Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.¹²²

It is likely that these instructions were motivated by Jesus' concern to propagate his message on one limited objective, namely, the Hebrew people. After-all, the Jesuit scholar, Daniel Harrington, reminds us that:

...Jesus was a Jewish teacher. Much of his teaching according to the Gospels stands well within the boundaries of the Torah and the wisdom tradition. Nevertheless, the Gospels present Jesus as the climactic revelation of God, surpassing and fulfilling the revelations accorded previously to the people of God.¹²³

Hence, as Jesus' message is associated with the Torah it was only natural that he should seek first to direct his preaching, and that of his disciples, to those under the umbrella of Judaism. As we shall see shortly, this limitation imposed by Jesus was of a temporary nature.

Furthermore, Mark records an incident which appears to show that Jesus curtailed his ministry to the Hebrew people. Mark states:

...And from there he arose and went away to the region of Tyre and Sidon...But immediately a woman whose little daughter was possessed by an unclean spirit, heard of him, and came and fell down at his feet. Now the woman was a Greek, a Syrophoenician by birth.

And she begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. And he said to her, 'Let the children first be fed, for it is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs'. But she answered him, 'Yes, Lord; yet even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs'. And he said to her 'For this saying you may go your way; the demon has left your daughter'.¹²⁴

The woman portrayed in the above story was a Greek and probably a pagan. It is clear that the term 'children' is a reference to the Jewish people, and the Gentiles are designated 'dogs'. Undoubtedly, Jesus' use of these words

appears to be harsh and rude. Perhaps the incident reflects Jesus' perplexity in that he is unsure with regard to the universality of his mission. The woman's daughter was healed and this may represent an initial expression of the inherent universalistic element in Jesus' message which in time was to transcend the boundaries of first-century Judaism and address all nations.

Nevertheless, the question whether Christianity is fundamentally different from other great world religions is increasingly being raised by liberal Christian theologians. John Hick, for example, in The Myth of God Incarnate (1977) repudiates the incarnation as a barrier to dialogue and growth with other belief systems. According to Hick, other religions must be acknowledged as legitimate avenues of salvation and 'what we cannot say is that all who are saved are saved by Jesus of Nazareth'.¹²⁵ In his more recent publication, The Myth of Christian Uniqueness (1987), Hick states:

...For once it is granted that salvation is in fact taking place not only within the Christian but also within the other great traditions, it seems arbitrary and unrealistic to go on insisting that the Christ-event is the sole and exclusive source of human salvation.¹²⁶

It is clear, therefore, that for Hick there is little distinctive about Christianity. All the great world religions are valid cultural expressions which arise from different social contexts. The radical re-interpretation of Jesus and all that flows from him is secondary to the desire for a global religious vision. Christ comes second to world religions. Still, it is unfair to other religions, as it is to Christianity itself, to ignore the distinctiveness of the Christian faith. Hick's analysis of Christianity is a serious diminution of the Christian message in the way he ignores, almost entirely, the way Jesus has shaped it. The

church must not apologise for the fact that it regards Jesus as wholly unique. Why?

According to the Hanson brothers:

...Through Jesus Christ God has shown that his clearest mode of self-revelation lies in a life of complete human obedience, crowned by suffering and death. There is no other means by which God, being who he is, could have revealed himself more truly, just because he is the God whose very nature is self-giving love. This is exactly what the author of Hebrews means when he says that God, who revealed himself of old through the prophets, has now spoken to us 'in the mode of a Son'.¹²⁷

Therefore, the distinctiveness of the Christian faith is seen primarily in Jesus' unique relationship with God. The self-giving love of God is revealed via Jesus' ministry, suffering and death. From the Christian perspective, the resurrection of Jesus proclaims that God vindicated Jesus and that self-giving love, even when it leads to suffering and death, is not fruitless or powerless. The notion of the vindication of Jesus is common to both Christianity and Islam. In the former it is expressed via the resurrection of Jesus which was the culmination of Jesus' willingness to endure the consequences of his ministry passively; whereas in the latter it is expressed through the force-factor which, from the Muslim viewpoint, necessitates the rejection of the fact of Jesus' crucifixion. It follows, therefore, that if God was associated with Jesus in his death and resurrection, then such a unique association has universal significance. Consequently, Visser't Hooft, a former General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, considers that 'there is no universality if there is no unique event'.¹²⁸ Hence, uniqueness and universality belong together. The concept of the universality of Christianity is reflected by Matthew's record of the risen Jesus' exhortation as follows:

...And Jesus came and said to them 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.¹²⁹

The above commission to universalise the Gospel may reflect the teaching of the early Church in the light of Jesus' resurrection.¹³⁰ On the other hand, this commission may stem from the teaching of the pre-Easter Jesus.¹³¹ In any case, Jesus' ministry, death and resurrection were interpreted by Christians as having unique and universal significance and must therefore be universally made known.

Likewise, Muslims claim that Islam has universal significance. Numerous Quranic verses indicate that Muḥammad considered his call to prophethood and the message of the Qur'ān to be for all people.¹³² For the Muslim, the letters of Muḥammad to the rulers of the Byzantine and Persian empires and his northern expeditions, which he conducted at the end of his life, confirm the notion of the universality of Islam. Moreover, after Muḥammad's death, Abū Bakr initiated the rapid advances of Islam beyond the boundaries of Arabia and in so doing he was in continuity with the lead of the Prophet. Indeed, the Qur'ān clearly asserts that Islam is to prevail over all religions.¹³³ However, a few Quranic passages tend to suggest that the message of the Qur'ān is limited to the peoples of Arabia via Arabic. The Qur'ān states:

...We sent not a messenger except to teach in the language of his own people, in order to make things clear to them. Now God leaves straying those whom He pleases and guides whom he pleases. And He is Exalted in Power full of Wisdom.¹³⁴

Therefore, how do we reconcile the above Quranic verse, which tends to limit the Qur'ān itself to a particular nation

speaking a particular language, with the aforementioned Quranic evidence which proclaims the universality of Islam? Perhaps this apparent contradiction is indicative of a development within the message of the Qur'ān and in Muḥammad's own thinking, though orthodox Muslims may deny this suggestion. All in all, it is obvious that the Qur'ān exhorts all mankind to accept the Qur'ān as God's revelation and Muḥammad as the messenger of God. The pragmatic approach of Muslim missionaries has established Islam in many countries of the world. Yet, even if Islam is to triumph over all religions, including Judaism and Christianity as they demonstrated themselves to Muḥammad, the Qur'ān, as shown in the third chapter of this thesis, upholds the integrity of the previous scriptures and never intends to displace them. The said scriptures testify to the uniqueness and universality of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. Thus, is there something in Muḥammad's ministry which equals or supersedes the ministry mediated to mankind via Jesus?

Firstly, the Qur'ān frequently urges men to believe in and to obey God and His Messenger.¹³⁵ Further, according to the Qur'ān, whoever loves God and follows Muḥammad is rewarded with the love of God and the forgiveness of his sins.¹³⁶ Also, the Qur'ān portrays Muḥammad as one with a tremendous nature and with the assurance of a great reward.¹³⁷ Still, other Quranic references suggest definite limitations to Muḥammad's person and ministry. For one thing, he is a servant of God like other servants¹³⁸, and his mission is only to convey the message.¹³⁹ Moreover, he is a warner¹⁴⁰, a messenger of glad tidings¹⁴¹ and one who gives light.¹⁴² Certainly, the message conveyed by Muḥammad was new for his people as well as for himself.¹⁴³ Nonetheless, the Qur'ān asserts that nothing differentiates the message conveyed by Muḥammad from that proclaimed by the previous prophets.¹⁴⁴ In reality, Muḥammad is commanded to recite:

...Say, 'I am no bringer of new-fangled doctrine among the messengers, nor do I know what will be

done with me or with you. I follow but that which is revealed to me by inspiration. I am but a Warner open and clear.¹⁴⁵

The Qur'ān portrays some messengers excelling others¹⁴⁶, but it also states that 'We make no difference between one and another of them'.¹⁴⁷ There is no Quranic evidence to suggest a unique excellence of Muḥammad among the messengers. Accordingly, if there is nothing unique in the message conveyed by Muḥammad, how can the said message have universal significance? God's promise to Abraham, as portrayed by the Bible¹⁴⁸ and the Qur'ān¹⁴⁹, assured him that he will be a blessing to all nations. If Islam is accepted as being the restatement of the religion of Abraham, then it follows that it possesses universal significance. Yet, from the Christian viewpoint, Jesus, in contrast to Muḥammad, communicated a unique message to mankind. According to the Bible, Jesus does not only convey a message. He is the message, the Word of God enfleshed, God's expression of Himself for mankind and for their redemption.

Section 4.3: Jesus and Muhammad: The Question of Finality

According to orthodox Christians, God's revelation is found finally and completely in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. In this regard, Sir Norman Anderson comments:

...If God could have adequately revealed himself in any other way, how can one possibly believe he would have gone to the almost unbelievable lengths of the incarnation?¹⁵⁰

The notion of the incarnation embodies the finality of the revelation in Jesus. Thus, the letter to the Hebrews begins:

...In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son...¹⁵¹

As previously shown, the Biblical affirmation and Quranic rejection of the Sonship of Jesus is not as severe as it would seem. For the Sonship of Jesus which the Bible affirms, the Qur'ān does not reject. Likewise, the Sonship of Jesus which the Qur'ān rejects, the Bible does not affirm. Christians and Muslims should recognise the presence of these two concepts and the difference between them. Nonetheless, the above use of the term 'Son' portrays Jesus as one superior to all other messengers of God. This forms the basis for the author of the letter in question to exhort his readers not to go back to their former faith which foreshadowed the advent of Christ. With the finality of Jesus there goes, of course, the finality of his message. A hint of this is given in the Fourth Gospel where Jesus is portrayed as saying:

...I am the way, and the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me.¹⁵²

The above verse could be interpreted in the sense that no-one can come to know God as Father except through faith in the Christ-event.¹⁵³ The implication of this interpretation

allows for the possibility of God revealing himself to mankind in other ways outside the concept of Father and, thereby, Jesus' seemingly exclusive claim is somewhat softened. However, the said verse does not stand in isolation. Jesus, as the only way of salvation, becomes the subject of the apostolic preaching and as Peter declares:

...there is salvation in no one else for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.¹⁵⁴

This verse expresses the notion of the centrality of Jesus which, according to Casey, 'may represent genuinely early tradition'.¹⁵⁵ Cragg, commenting on the above verse, states:

...Would it be legitimate to paraphrase Peter's words as they might be heard by Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, animists, to whom he was not speaking? Might such a paraphrase run as follows: 'There is no saving evil situations except through the love that takes and saves them at its own cost. There is no other way in this whole wide world whereby redemption happens than the action-pattern of the Jesus who fulfilled the messianic hope, the hope which was the Hebraic form of the human yearning for the decisive answer to the wrongness of us all'.¹⁵⁶

The 'action-pattern' of Jesus which led to the cross is, for Cragg, the ultimate and final way of salvation. Consequently, Muhammad's 'action-pattern', as represented by the force-factor, is an alternative response to opposition which cannot be reconciled with the Christian understanding of the Christ-event.

Furthermore, Christians see Christ's salvation as the final offer to mankind. Hence, the author of the letter to the Hebrews states:

...But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the age to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.¹⁵⁷

It is evident from this verse that the author assumed that with Christ the end of the world was near. But however long the end-times, Christians were confident that in Christ's death on the cross God had spoken decisively and finally. For instance, Visser't Hooft comments:

...It is high time that Christians should rediscover that the very heart of their faith is that Jesus Christ did not come to make a contribution to the religious storehouse of mankind, but that in him God reconciled the world unto himself.¹⁵⁸

Similarly, Newbigin reminds us that we 'do not claim finality for Christianity in any of its empirical manifestations, instead, we claim finality for Christ'.¹⁵⁹ To accept the testimony of the New Testament is to proclaim Christ crucified, risen and exalted just as firmly and confidently as the first disciples did. In this compromise is not possible, even to please those of other belief systems. As Jurgen Moltmann has put it:

...as a Muslim I believe I would have little interest in a Christianity that makes vital concessions before entering into conversation with me.¹⁶⁰

This must not be interpreted as narrow-minded exclusivism, because Christians do not wish to exclude but to invite all to share the riches of Christ; but it is an unambiguous recognition of Jesus' unique claims upon all. The message of Christianity is that in Jesus we find the final and complete answer to man's needs. Thus, Lewis comments on the finality of Jesus as follows:

...He came in complete human form to meet a universal need in a way that is adequate for all times and places and is without parallel or substitute.¹⁶¹

But, all of this having been said, how can Christians reconcile their belief in the finality of Jesus with the Quranic contention that Muḥammad is 'the Seal of the Prophets'? The Qur'ān states:

...Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but he is the Messenger of God, and the Seal of the Prophets. And God has full knowledge of all things.¹⁶²

A. Yūsuf 'Alī comments on this verse as follows:

...The Holy Prophet Muḥammad closed the long line of Messengers. God's teaching is and will always be continuous, but there has been and will be no Prophet after Muḥammad.¹⁶³

Therefore, for many Muslims Muḥammad's prophethood simply is final. Still, the Quranic phrase khātam al-nabiyyīn, normally translated as 'the Seal of the Prophets', is open to interpretation. For example, according to Friedmann:

...A verse included in the Diwān of Umayya b. Abī al-Ṣalt (7th century) speaks of the Prophet as a person 'by means of whom God sealed the prophets before him and after him' (bihi khatama allahu man qablahu/wa man ba'dahu min nabiyyin khātam). This verse assumes the appearance of prophets after the death of Muḥammad and the verb khātamā used in it cannot mean that he was the last prophet. One is tempted to consider the possibility that it means here: 'he stamped upon them his seal (of approval?)'.¹⁶⁴

The above sentiments appear to indicate that the Muslim belief in the finality of Muḥammad's prophethood was not generally accepted in the early days of Islam. Moreover, the Muslim commentator, Abū 'Ubayda (died 824-5 A.D.), states:

...the Prophet...is the seal of the prophets, which means the best of the prophets...(ya'nī al-nabiyya sal'am annahu khātam al-anbiyā' wa huwa khayr al-anbiyā sal'am).¹⁶⁵

Additionally, Watt thinks that for the first Muslims the significance of Muḥammad as 'the Seal of the Prophets' was 'that he was the seal confirming previous prophets'¹⁶⁶. Thus, the Muslim belief in the finality of Muḥammad's prophethood did not have universal acceptance in the early centuries of Islam. In the wake of the emergence of false prophets, in the eighth and ninth centuries, it seems likely that the notion of the finality of Muḥammad's prophethood was formulated in order to counteract spurious claims to prophethood. Hence, Ibn Hishām (died 828) relates the following tradition which portrays Muḥammad as saying:

...The Day of Judgement will not take place before tribal groups from my community join the polytheists and worship idols. In my community there will be thirty liars, each of whom will claim to be a prophet, but I am the seal of the prophets and there is no prophet after me.¹⁶⁷

In any case, the Muslim doctrine of the finality of Muḥammad's prophethood is now a central tenet of Islamic belief. In this regard, the Muslim understanding of Jesus' escape from the cross and rapture into heaven is sometimes used by Muslim polemicists to show that Muḥammad is the final prophet. In other words, according to the Muslim mind, Jesus was not destined to achieve political victory over the power of Rome. On the other hand, Muḥammad was successful via his rôle in the victory over Mecca and, thereby, the finality of his prophethood is vindicated.

To reject the fact of the crucifixion of Jesus is, from the historical perspective, absurd. Yet, Islamic theology was forged in the heat of the force-factor, and this principle finds fulfilment via political and military means to achieve religious objectives. Certainly, the Muslim claim in respect of Muḥammad as the final prophet is in keeping with the Islamic conception of prophethood. Cragg suggests that within Islam 'the prophets...are the tutors through whom the

divine education of humanity proceeds'.¹⁶⁸ In Islam prophecy is therefore equated with the divine education of mankind. The New Testament, however, transcends the concept of prophethood in order to portray the significance of Jesus' mission to mankind. Accordingly, Cragg states:

...Jesus, according to the Gospels, used the words: 'Yea, I say unto you and more than a prophet' (Matt. 11.9), in respect of the forerunner, John the Baptist...It is that 'more' upon which the whole New Testament proceeds - the 'more' of Messianic action to redeem, the 'more' of God's loving engagement with the sequel to rejected 'education' of the world, the 'more' of a divine expressing of the Word, hitherto only spoken, but now in flesh and personality, in suffering and salvation.¹⁶⁹

Jesus' rejection of the force-factor in favour of accepting the consequences of his ministry passively provides, from the Christian standpoint, another dimension to prophethood whereby the message and the messenger become one. The Christian understanding of the Word made flesh in Jesus proclaims that God is involved with the world in a way which cannot be adequately expressed via the concept of prophethood alone. Consequently, the question of the significance of the Muslim understanding of the finality of Muḥammad's prophethood has been superseded by the Christian doctrine of the incarnation.

The influential Christian theologian, Karl Barth (1886-1968), considers that the finality of Jesus' mission to mankind is absolute. Barth states:

...The revelation of God in Jesus Christ maintains that our justification and sanctification, our conversion and salvation, have been brought about and achieved once and for all in Jesus Christ. And our faith in Jesus Christ consists in our recognizing and admitting and affirming and accepting the fact that everything has actually been done for us once and for all in Jesus Christ.¹⁷⁰

From the above remarks it is clear that Barth is uncompromising in his acceptance of the finality of God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ. Therefore, the Muslim interpretation of Muḥammad as 'the Seal of the Prophets' cannot be accommodated within Barth's understanding of the exclusiveness of Christianity. The exclusiveness of Christ, as advocated by Barth, was applied to comparative theology by the Dutch missionary scholar Hendrik Kraemer in his influential book The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World, written for the World Missionary Conference at Tambaram, near Madras, in 1938. Kraemer, commenting on the absoluteness of Christianity, states:

...the only standard of reference can be the new and incommensurable world which has been revealed and made real by God in Jesus Christ...as the ultimate standard of reference, is the crisis of all religions, of the non-Christian religions and of empirical Christianity too. This implies that the most fruitful and legitimate way to analyse and evaluate all religions is to investigate them in the light of the revelation of Christ.¹⁷¹

Thus, for Kraemer, Christ is the arbiter of every religion and, accordingly, Muslim claims with regard to the finality of Muḥammad's ministry are implicitly rejected. Hence, Barth and Kraemer both embrace the notion of Christian exclusivism which emphasizes the finality of Christ in such a way as to exclude the Muslim belief in the finality of Muḥammad's prophethood.

Next, Karl Rahner (born 1904), a famous Christian theologian, abandoned the concept of exclusivism in favour of a mildly positive response to other religions. That is, he favoured the idea of the adherents of other religions being 'anonymous Christians'. Rahner comments:

...Christianity does not simply confront the member of an extra-Christian religion as a mere non-Christian but as someone who can and must already be regarded in this or that respect as an

anonymous Christian. It would be wrong to regard the pagan as someone who has not yet been touched in any way by God's grace and truth.¹⁷²

Thus, according to Rahner, God's grace is within mankind, and when persons accept this grace they are accepting the Christ, God's word and activity in the world. When Christ is received in this way the recipients may be unaware of what they are doing and, consequently, may be classed as 'anonymous Christians'. This line of thought must lead to the conclusion that Muḥammad was, at least in part, an 'anonymous Christian'. In other words, to the extent that Muḥammad accepted the grace of God he was, according to Rahner's thesis, accepting Christ. From the Christian standpoint, the grace of God found supreme and final expression via Jesus' life, death and resurrection. Muḥammad's use of the power-structure in order to propagate Islam cannot be reconciled with the Christian understanding of the grace of God. Indeed, Rahner goes on to assert that Christianity is the climactic and final revelation of God. For Rahner, the Christ-event is 'something which must happen once, and once only at the point where the world begins to enter into its final phase'.¹⁷³

Further, Kenneth Cragg, in his book entitled The Christ and the Faiths: Theology in Cross-Reference (1986) provides an interesting response to the question of the finality of Jesus. In short, Cragg suggests that Christians must 'seek and find the utmost possible relation to the themes and tensions of other faiths in positive hope'.¹⁷⁴ Undoubtedly, such sentiments are motivated by Christian love. But the force-factor, so prevalent in Muḥammad's approach to mission, creates a theme and tension which cannot be accommodated within the Christian interpretation of the cross and resurrection of Jesus. Indeed, Cragg breaks free of his circuitous, and perhaps over-sensitive, thought-forms in order to proclaim the finality and distinctiveness of the

Christ-event as follows:

...The Church then is the trustee community of the gospel which interprets the nature of God as responsible love, for ever grounds that interpretation in the person and the wounds of Jesus as the Christ, and presents him as, for all mankind, the where and how of grace, of forgiveness, and peace. There is no doubt of the distinctiveness of that gospel and, equally, there is no doubt of its bearing upon the perceptions and anxieties of every other religion.¹⁷⁵

Therefore, it must be said clearly, yet with love, that the Christian faith cannot surrender the claim that God in Christ has disclosed himself in a particular way at a particular moment in time. We should not minimize, or blur, the stark difference between Christianity and Islam on this point of God's unique disclosure in Christ. The scandal is that of speaking, as Christians must, in terms of the incarnation as a unique historical event in which God intervened decisively in the world he had created. The Muslim parts company with us at this point, because although he has a high regard for Jesus as a prophet and as a man of God, the notion that God was localized in Jesus, or any person for that matter, is a blasphemous and idolatrous idea. Incarnation finds no place within the structures of such a rigid monotheism. Accordingly, Christians can see no theological significance in Muhammad's life and ministry in the light of the Christ-event.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

'What do you think of the Prophet Muḥammad?' This is a question which Muslims sometimes address to Christians. Having surveyed the evidence in the foregoing chapters, it is now possible to suggest a number of conclusions.

In general, Muslims are suspicious of any non-Muslim responses to Muḥammad. Indeed, such scepticism is entirely legitimate. As we have shown in this thesis, Muḥammad, over the centuries, has been severely and unjustly maligned. Some Christians have dismissed his many virtues and accentuated his weaknesses. A few have been positive in their responses to him, though with qualifications. However, in more recent times, informed Christians have been more sympathetic and objective in their appraisals of Muḥammad.

All in all, no one can seriously dispute the conclusion that few personalities have shaped the destiny of history with a stronger impress than Muḥammad. Who but a great administrator could begin to weld into a united community those Arabs whose whole allegiance had rested for centuries solely in their respective tribes? Who but a great political leader could prepare the way for the spread of Arab dominion and the establishment of a massive empire under such hostile circumstances? Who but a magnanimous victor could greet with an amnesty the very opponents whom he felt had caused his expulsion from his native city only a few years previously? Who but a great prophet could inspire men to such devotion to himself and to so determined a submission to the God he proclaimed? For many millions of Muslims today it is Muḥammad through whom God has revealed the Qur'ān, and Muḥammad as their example speaks with an authority that inspires and moulds their personal lives.

Muḥammad's greatness is also reflected in the changes he

created in the social structure and moral standards of his people. He expunged idolatry and its evil consequences. He sought to control adultery, theft and exploitation of slaves, and the numerous orphanages extant in the Muslim world bear testimony to his concern for orphans.

Undoubtedly, Christians often have been unjustly slow to recognise and quick to criticise the greatness of Muḥammad. For some Christians, Muḥammad's moral character is suspect because of his marriages, his treatment of individual opponents, his dealings with the Jews, and his raids and wars. Certainly, these matters stand in sharp contrast to Jesus' moral example via his passive response to the consequences of his ministry. Muḥammad's use of the force-factor in order to propagate Islam was perhaps destined to create incidents which, from the Christian perspective, appear to have no divine sanction. Still, Christianity and Islam are traceable to the same soil, namely, monotheism. Different plants have appeared on the surface, but it is a mistake to imagine that they have not grown from the same soil. Thus Christians should recognise that Muḥammad's witness to God awakened faith and that under his guidance men and women have truly met God. In other words, Christians should respect Muḥammad as a significant witness to the Abrahamic tradition of faith.

Moreover, the Qur'ān portrays Muḥammad as one in continuity with all the previous prophets. Is it possible that in asserting that he was the seal of the prophets, the Qur'ān meant only that prophethood ceased with him? Is it possible that, in citing him as a noble creature and as a good example to the community, the Qur'ān meant only that he was a guide and not a model for all behaviour; that the community should submit to God as he, and the first believers, had submitted; that they should seek forgiveness from their Lord as he sought forgiveness; that, in brief, his task as a warner and bringer of good-tidings was greater than his person? There is strong evidence in the Qur'ān which beckons a 'yes' to

many or all of these questions.

In the last analysis, a Christian understanding of Muḥammad must be formulated in the light of the Christ-event. It is quite natural for Muslims to form a comparison between Muḥammad and Jesus. Christians too see Jesus as born of a woman, a man among men, the apostle and prophet of Galilee, tempted and praying, hungry and exhausted, ridiculed and rejected. Yet, according to the Bible, Jesus does not only convey a message. He is the message, the Word of God enfleshed, God's expression of Himself for mankind. Accordingly, the fact that Jesus faced the consequences of his ministry passively, in contrast to Muḥammad's use of the power-structure, and the reality of Jesus' filial and unique relationship with God, provides for Christians a deeper theological dimension to the Abrahamic tradition of prophethood as espoused by Muḥammad. From the orthodox Christian viewpoint, the Bible contains the unique account of what God has done, culminating in the overcoming of the forces of darkness, sin and death in the cross and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth.

The task that faces us, both Christians and Muslims, is to recognise more clearly the full extent of the grace of God as revealed via Jesus and Muḥammad. In so doing the respective doctrinal legacies of conflicts already centuries old may appear less daunting. It is not by indulging in them, but by finding new perspectives which transcend them, that we will eventually solve them. That journey beckons to us.

CHAPTER 1

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13. ibid., page 129.
14. sūrah 37: 149 - 152 and 159.
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17. ibid., page 244.
18. sūrah 2: 125; see also, sūrah 3: 96.
19. The Ka'bah was cared for by some members of an Arabian tribe, namely, the Quraish. Muḥammad's family was attached to this tribe. However, the religious reforms created by Islam were resisted by the Quraish.
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26. This word, which means 'the praised', is derived from ḥamd, praise. Aḥmad and Maḥmud are varieties of it. The name was not uncommon; see JURJI, E.J., 'Pre-Islamic use of the name Muḥammad', in Muslim World, 26, 1936, pages 389 - 391.

27. TLM, page 69.

28. See RAHMAN, F., 'Allamah Shiblī's Sīrat al-Nabī. Pakistan Historical Society, Karachi, 1970, page 160; the Prophet's birthday falls on the 12th day of the month Rabī' al - Awwal, and is kept as a festival in Muslim countries; see JEFFERY, A., Reader in Islam. The Hague, 1962, pages 606 - 620.

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30. TLM page 72.

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42. RM, page 55.
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44. See RM, page 52.
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46. sūrah 44: 3.
47. sūrah 97: 1.
48. See MPS, page 20; also Bell, R., 'Muhammad's visions', in Muslim World, 24, 1934, page 146.
49. sūrah 96: 1 - 8.
50. See RM, page 71.
51. sūrah 81: 19 - 25; see also, sūrahs 53: 14 - 18; 73: 1 - 8; 74: 1 - 2.

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56. See RM, page 73.
57. sūrah 93: 1 - 5.
58. sūrah 2: 285; see also, sūrahs 3: 44; 4: 105, 136; 5:
67; 9: 97; 14:1; 25: 1; 27: 6; 39:41; 69: 43; 76: 23.
59. sūrah 2:97, see also, sūrahs 15:8; 16:2, 102; 26:192 -
196; 42: 52; 53: 5 - 9; 69: 40; 81: 23. The angel
Gabriel (Jibrīl) and the Holy Spirit are considered, by
most Muslims, to be one and the same.
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61. sūrah 43: 4.
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63. sūrahs 12: 2; 13: 37; 16: 103; 20: 113; 26: 192 - 195;
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81. sūrahs 2: 170; 5: 104; 34: 43.

82. sūrah 13: 43.
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92. sūrah 8: 31.
93. sūrah 34: 43.
94. sūrahs 6: 25; 8: 31; 25: 5; 68: 15.
95. sūrah 21: 5.
96. sūrahs 6: 33; 25: 30.
97. sūrahs 6: 29; 11: 7; 23: 82; 37: 16, 17; 72:7; 79: 10 -
12.
98. sūrah 82.9.

99. sūrahs 8: 32; 29: 54; 38: 17.
100. sūrah 6: 26.
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159. sūrahs 2: 61; 3: 112, 183, 184; 4: 155; 5: 70.
160. sūrahs 2: 174; 3: 187; 4: 46; 5: 13; 41; 6: 92.
161. sūrah 9.30. Is there any evidence outside the Qur'ān that Jews anywhere spoke of Ezra thus? Can it be that a few Jews were teasing Muḥammad? See sūrah 3: 181.

162. sūrah 2: 44.
163. sūrah 2: 96.
164. sūrah 5: 82.
165. sūrah 5: 51.
166. sūrah 9: 34.
167. sūrah 2: 142.
168. sūrah 8:53 - 58 possibly refers to these Jews.
169. sūrah 59: 2 - 17.
170. See MPS, page 172.
171. KERR, D.A., 'The Prophet Muḥammad: Toward a Christian assessment', in Newsletter, 17 - 18, Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian - Muslim Relations, Birmingham, 1987, page 32.
172. sūrah 61. 14.
173. WGQ, page 28. See also, WATT, W.M., 'The Nature of Muḥammad's Prophethood', in Scottish Journal of Religious Studies, 8, 1987, pages 77 - 84.
174. sūrahs 5: 85; 57: 27; 61: 6.
175. sūrahs 3: 47; 4: 171; 19: 16 - 31.
176. sūrah 3: 50 - 52.
177. sūrah 3: 54 - 55.

178. sūrah 5: 72; see also, sūrahs 4: 171 - 172; 5: 76 - 78.
179. sūrah 4: 157 - 158.
180. See BASETTI - SANI, G., The Koran in the Light of Christ. Franciscan Herald Press, Chicago, 1977, page 174.
181. See ELDER E.E., 'Crucifixion of Jesus in the Koran', in Muslim World, 13, 1923, pages 256 - 258.
182. sūrah 3: 61.
183. sūrah 5: 4.
184. sūrah 5:69 - 71.
185. sūrah 9: 31 - 34
186. sūrah 5: 52.
187. sūrah 5: 6.
188. sūrah 9: 29.
189. See RM, page 276.
190. sūrah 5: 4.
191. HAYKAL, M.H., The Life of Muhammad, Trans., Wessels, A., New York, 1976, page 506.
192. MUIR, W., The Life of Mahomet (4 vols). Smith, Elder and Co., London, 1861, vol. 4, pages 253 - 254.
193. TLM, page 516; see also, RM, page 254; HAYKAL, M.H., op.cit., pages 372 - 373; Lings, M., Muhammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources. Islamic Texts Society and George Allen and Unwin, London, 1983, page 268.

194. TLM, page 516.
195. MPS, page 127.
196. 'ALĪ, M.N., Islam : A Christian Perspective.
Paternoster Press, Devon, 1983, page 32.
197. See MPS, pages 128 - 129.
198. See 'ALĪ, M.N., op.cit., page 32; also, MPS, pages 158 - 159.
199. sūrah 33: 37.
200. HAYKAL, M.H., op.cit., page 291.
201. sūrah 4: 3; also 4: 129.
202. sūrah 33: 50.
203. NOWAIHI (al) M., 'Towards a re-evaluation of Muḥammad: Prophet and man', in Muslim World, 60, 1970, page 306.

CHAPTER 2

NOTES AND REFERENCES PAGES 53-159

1. The name means 'deputy' or 'representative', and was given to the leaders of the Muslim community after the death of Muḥammad.
2. The caliphate was at first centred at Medina. The fourth caliph, 'Alī, moved the centre to Kūfah in Iraq.
3. Abū Bakr - the father-in-law of Muḥammad.
4. Towns fell to Islamic rule with great rapidity as follows: Damascus 635, Jerusalem 640, Alexandria 642, Isfaham 643, Tripoli 647, Cyprus 649.
5. Monophysitism: The doctrine that in the Person of Christ there was a single (divine) nature, in contrast to the notion of a double nature (divine and human) as espoused by orthodox Christian theology.
6. CTM, page 219.
7. See TRITTON, A.S., The Caliphs and their non-Muslim Subjects. Frank Cass, London, 1930 and 1970.
8. See Encyclopaedia of Islam, Vol 2. New edn., London and Leiden, 1960, article Dhimma, pages 227 -231.
9. Muslim and Christian scholars agree that the anti-Christian legislation found in the 'Ordinance of 'Umar' is not the work of 'Umar, but of a much later age. See, for example, 'ALĪ, M.N., Islam: A Christian Perspective. Paternoster Press, Devon, 1983, page 38.
10. SWARTZ, M., 'The position of Jews in Arab lands following the rise of Islam' , in Muslim World, 60, 1970, page 10.

11. ibid, pages 10 - 11.

12. See BARON, S.W., A Social and Religious History of the Jews. New York, 1957, page 110.

13. See WALTZ, J., 'Historical perspectives on early missions to Muslims', in Muslim World, 61, 1971, page 175.

14. See HUSAYN, T, La Grande Epreuve. Vrin, Paris, 1974, pages 15 - 33.

15. See LEWIS, B., The Arabs in History. Hutchinson, London, 1966, page 80.

16. ibid., pages 81 - 82.

17. See WATT, W.M., Islamic Philosophy, and Theology. Edinburgh University Press, Islamic Surveys I, 1962.

18. NASR, S.H., Ideals and Realities of Islam. 1st edn., 1966; 2nd edn., George Allen and Unwin, London, 1975, page 151.

19. The response of Christian writers to Islam was only one segment of the debate between Christianity and Islam.

20. SEBEOS, Histoire d'Heraclius. Trans., Macler, F., Paris, 1904, ch. 30; cited in MOORHEAD, J., 'The earliest Christian theological response to Islam', in Religion, 11, 1981, pages 265 - 266.

21. SWARTZ, M., op.cit., page 7.

22. One of the earliest extant Jewish references to Islam is hostile. See BONWETSCH, N., (ed.), Abhandlungen der Königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften Zu Göttingen Philologisch - Historisch Klasse. Neue Folge, 1910, pages 86 - 87.

23. SWARTZ, M., op.cit., page 8; see also, ARNOLD T.W., The Preaching of Islam. London, 1913, page 132.
24. BARON, S.W., op.cit., page 93.
25. See Genesis ch 16; Christian scholarship is divided on the question of the historicity of Abraham and Ishmael; see RAD, Gerhard von, Genesis. S.C.M. Press, London, 1979, pages 158 - 161; 167 - 170.
26. MPS, page 118.
27. sūrah 26: 57 - 60.
28. sūrah 6 : 84 - 86.
29. MOORHEAD, J., op.cit., page 266.
30. SEBEOS, op.cit., ch. 35; cited in Moorhead, J., op.cit., page 266.
31. MOORHEAD, J., op.cit., page 266.
32. See First John 2: 18, 22; 4: 3; Second John V. 7.
33. See Second Thessalonians 2: 1 - 12.
34. See Revelation to John chs. 11; 13; 17.
35. JAMES, M.R., 'Man of Sin and Antichrist', in Hastings, J., (ed.), Dictionary of the Bible, Vol. 3. T. and T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1906, pages 227 - 228.
36. CHARLES, R.H., (Trans.), The Chronicle of John Bishop of Nikiu. London, 1916, page 121.
37. See Revelation to John 13: 11 - 18.

38. Jacob of Edessa, Scholia on Passages of the Old Testament. Ed., and Trans., Phillips, G, London, 1864, page 42.
39. BARHEBRAEUS, G., Chronicon Ecclesiasticum sectio II Primates Orientis. Ed., and Trans., Abbeloos, J.B., and Lamy, T.J., Louvain, 1873, page 136.
40. ibid., page 136; N.B. this work was written at some point in the 13th century and the reliability of this material has always been open to question.
41. THEOPHANES, Chronographia. Ed., Boor, Ch. de-, Leipzig, 1883 , pages 642 - 643.
42. See, for example, MCCARTHY, D.J., 'Plagues and the Sea of Reeds', in Journal of Biblical Literature, 85, 1966, pages 137 - 158.
43. Origen, Cels. lib. II., Scct. 48; cited in PALEY, W., Evidences of Christianity. New edn., London, 1849, page 362.
44. See Mark 8: 12; Luke 11: 29f; Matthew 12: 39f.
45. See KÜNG, H., On Being a Christian. Fount, 1978, pages 232 - 233.
46. See, for example, KERR, D., 'The Prophet Muḥammad in Christian Theological Perspective', in Discussion Paper, 2, Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations, Birmingham, 1982, page 4.
47. See 'Iconoclastic Controversy', in The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church. 2nd edn., (eds.), Cross, F.L., and Livingstone, E.A., O.U.P., 1984, pages 687 - 688.

48. SAHAS, D.J., John of Damascus on Islam, the 'heresy of the Ishmaelites'. Brill, Leiden, 1972, page 133. Hereafter JDI.
49. MERRILL, J.E., 'Of the Tractate of John of Damascus on Islam', in Muslim World, 41, 1951, page 89.
50. See SWEETMAN, J.W., Islam and Christian Theology. Lutterworth Press, London, part 1, vol. 1, 1945, page 65. Hereafter ICT.
51. Genesis 21: 9 - 10.
52. Genesis 21: 14.
53. HABAR - the meaning of this name is not clear; see MERRILL, J.E., op.cit., page 95.
54. ibid., page 95.
55. See RAD, Gerhard von, Old Testament Theology, Volume One. Trans., Stalker, D.M.G., S.C.M. Press, London, 1975, pages 210 - 219.
56. Joshua 24: 14B; see also, verse 2.
57. Mameth may represent colloquial non-Muslim pronunciation; see MERRILL J.E., op.cit., page 95.
58. ibid., page 96.
59. See JOMIER, J., op.cit., pages 20 - 21.
60. JDI, page 134.
61. sūrah 112: 2 - 3.
62. sūrahs 4: 171; 43: 59.

63. sūrah 19: 28 - 29.
64. See Exodus 6: 14f; Numbers 26: 59; Matthew chs. 1 & 2; Luke chs. 1 & 2.
65. See AQ, page 773, note 2481.
66. sūrahs 3: 55; 4: 157; 19: 33; see also, ELDER, E.E., 'Crucifixion of Jesus in the Koran', in Muslim World, 13, 1923.
67. The proverb in question is absent from the text. It is possibly the one from Plato: 'You are spinning me dreams'. See GAUDEUL, J.-M., Encounters and Clashes : Islam and Christianity in History, 2 vols. Pontificio Istituto di Studi Arabi e Islamici, Rome, 1984, vol. 2, page 10. Hereafter ECI.
68. JDI, page 135.
69. See Exodus chs. 19 and 20; see also, HUFFMON, H.B., 'The Exodus, Sinai and the Credo', in Catholic Biblical Quarterly, 27, 1965, pages 101 - 113.
70. See Exodus 24: 1 - 11.
71. See Exodus 24: 12 - 18; also, according to the N.T., John received 'The Revelation' in isolation in a cave, via the ministry of an angel; see Revelation 1:2.
72. In the ninth century 'Alī al - Ṭabarī', a convert from Christianity, formulated the Muslim response to the Christian claim that Muḥammad had no divine mandate for his ministry; see ṬABARĪ (al) 'Alī b. Rabbān, The Book of Religion and Empire. Trans., Mingana, A., Longmans - Green, Manchester, 1922, pages 2 - 5.
73. See Isaiah 7: 14.

74. BROWN, R.E., The Virginal Conception and Bodily Resurrection of Jesus. Geoffrey Chapman, London, 1974, page 16.
75. For a detailed list of citations and allusions see SCROGGIE, W.G., A Guide to the Gospels. Pickering and Inglis, London, 1973, pages 268 - 270.
76. See KÜMMEL, W.G., Introduction to the New Testament. S.C.M. Press, London, 1975, page 111.
77. First Corinthians 15: 3 - 4; see also, Luke 24: 25 - 27.
78. See ROBINSON, H.W., 'The Hebrew Conception of Corporate Personality', in Corporate Personality in Ancient Israel. Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1964, pages 1 - 20.
79. RAD, Gerhard von, Old Testament Theology, Volume Two. Trans., Stalker, D.M.G., S.C.M. Press, London, 1975, pages 260 - 262; 273 - 277.
80. The apostolic Christians may have used Hosea 6:2 in favour of the resurrection of Christ. It is interesting, however, that Tertullian (c. 210) is the first Christian writer to quote the above verse. Whereas Paul (c.50) states that Jesus 'was raised on the third day'. Does this signify a source other than Hosea?
81. Hosea 6:2.
82. PANNENBERG, W., Jesus God and Man. S.C.M. Press, London, 1976, page 31.
83. BARRETT, C.K., Jesus and the Gospel Tradition. S.P.C.K., London, 1967, page 25.

84. CONZELMANN, H., An Outline of the Theology of the New Testament. S.C.M. Press, London, 1976, page 129.
85. CASEY, M., From Jewish Prophet to Gentile God: The Origins and Development of New Testament Christology. James Clarke, Cambridge, 1991, page 44. Hereafter JPG.
86. Acts of the Apostles 10: 9 - 16.
87. JDI, page 136.
88. sūrah 13: 43; see also, sūrah 29: 52.
89. AQ, page 617, note 1867.
90. JDI, page 136.
91. WGO, page 42.
92. sūrah 3: 39.
93. sūrah 4: 171.
94. JDI, page 137.
95. In reality the 'Black Stone' is a very dark reddish colour; see EL-DROUBIE, R., and HULMES, Edward, Islam. Longman, London, 1980, page 16.
96. JDI, page 138.
97. See MPS, page 157.
98. sūrah 33: 37.
99. MPS, pages 158 - 159.
100. sūrah 2: 230 - 231.

101. AQ, page 91, note 260.
102. JDI, page 139.
103. sūrah 54: 27 - 29; also 7: 73.
104. sūrah 91: 13 - 14; also 26: 155 - 159.
105. JDI, page 139.
106. sūrah 47: 15.
107. JDI, page 140.
108. JDI, page 141.
109. sūrah 5: 116 - 118.
110. Matthew 24: 17 - 35.
111. Acts of the Apostles 10: 9 - 16.
112. Matthew 14: 13 - 21.
113. sūrah 2.
114. sūrahs 16: 124; 62: 9.
115. sūrah 2: 172 - 173.
116. sūrah 5: 93.
117. MERRILL, J.E., op.cit., page 96.
118. DANIEL, N.A., Islam and the West: The Making of an Image. Edinburgh University Press, 1960, page 4. Hereafter IWI.

119. Originally written in Greek. Later rendered into Arabic and credited to Abū Qurra.
120. ICT, page 66.
121. John of Damascus, 'The Discussion of a Christian and a Saracen', Trans., Voorhis, J.W., in Muslim World, 25, 1935, pages 270 - 271.
122. See BELL, R., 'John of Damascus and the controversy with Islam', in Transactions of the Glasgow University Oriental Society, 4, 1913 - 22, page 38.
123. JDI, page 121.
124. IWI, page 4.
125. DUCCELLIER, A., Le Miroir de l'Islam Musulmans et Chrétiens d'Orient au Moyen - Age. Julliard, Paris, 1971, page 158.
126. Modern studies by George Graf show that some of the written disputations with Muslims have been falsely attributed to Théodore Abū Qurra; see GUILLAUME, A., 'Théodore Abū Qurra as Apologist', in Muslim World, 15, 1925, pages 42 - 46.
127. John of Damascus, Trans., Voorhis, J.W., op.cit., pages 272 - 273.
128. HUNTER, A.M., The Work and Words of Jesus. S.C.M. Press, London, 1973, page 82.
129. sūrahs 5: 113; 7: 133; 17: 101; 19: 30 - 33.
130. Deuteronomy 18: 15; also verse 18.

131. See DAVIES, G.H., 'Deuteronomy', in Peake's Commentary on the Bible, Black, M., and Rowley, H.H., (eds.), 1st published, 1962; revised edn., Thomas Nelson, Middlesex, 1972, page 278.
132. sūrah 4: 163 - 164.
133. Acts of the Apostles 3: 17 - 23.
134. JPG, page 152.
135. See VERMES, G., Jesus the Jew. 1st published, 1973; 2nd edn., S.C.M. Press, London, 1983, pages 218 - 222.
136. CRAGG, K., Jesus and the Muslim - An Exploration. George Allen and Unwin, London, 1985, page 66. Hereafter JME.
137. sūrahs 3: 45 - 47; 19: 22 - 33.
138. See Matthew 17: 1 - 8; Mark 9: 2 - 8; Luke 9: 28 - 36.
139. MACQUARRIE, J., Jesus Christ in Modern Thought. S.C.M. Press, London, 1990, page 399. Hereafter JCT.
140. sūrah 6: 164; see also, sūrahs 2: 123; 53: 38 - 42.
141. See Luke 16: 16; Matthew 12: 41.
142. sūrah 33: 40.
143. Abū Qurra, T., Opuscula, 25; P.G. 97, 1558 - 59; cited in WGQ, pages 21 - 22.
144. GUILLAUME, A., 'Théodore Abū Qurra as Apologist', in Muslim World, 15, 1925, page 46.
145. sūrah 4: 171.

146. WGO, page 43.
147. sūrah 3: 59.
148. GUILLAUME, A., op.cit., page 46.
149. MINGANA, A., 'Timothy's Apology for Christianity', in Woodbrooke Studies, Heffer, Cambridge, Vol. 2, 1928, pages 32 - 37.
150. ICT, page 80.
151. Ibn Ishāq (704 - 768) was the author of Muḥammad's Biography. His work, no longer extant, was consulted by Ibn Hishām (d. 828) whose book is accepted by Muslims as the major source of detail about the Prophet.
152. ICT, pages 82 and 83.
153. ICT, page 69.
154. See TURKI, A., 'Situation du Tributaire qui insulte l'Islam, au regard de la doctrine et de la jurisprudence musulmanes', in Studia Islamica, 30, 1969, pages 39 - 72.
155. ECI, Vol I, page 35.
156. ECI, Vol I, page 51.
157. KINDĪ (al) 'Abd al-Masīḥ, Risala 'Abdallāh b. Ismā'īl al-Hāshimī ilā 'Abd al-Masīḥ b. Ishāq al-Kindī wa risāla al-Kindī ila al-Hāshimī. Bible Lands Missions Aid Society, London, 1912, page 41.
158. ibid., page 85.

159. On the problem of influences upon Muhammad, see WATT, W.M., Muhammad at Mecca. O.U.P., 1953, pages 158 - 160.
160. ECI, Vol. I, pages 52 - 53.
161. See WALTZ, J., 'The significance of the voluntary martyrs of ninth-century Córdoba', in Muslim World, 60, 1970, page 151.
162. See WALTZ, J., op.cit., page 151.
163. See TRITTON, A.S., The Caliphs and Their Non-Muslim Subjects. London, 1930.
164. See DIDIER, H., 'Le Biconfessionnalisme en Espagne; esquisse d'un itineraire historique', in Islamochristiana, 7, 1981, pages 79 - 126.
165. DANIEL, N.A., The Arabs and Mediaeval Europe. Longman-Lib du Liban, London - Beirut, 1975, page 66.
166. See CUTLER, A., 'The ninth-century Spanish martyrs' movement and the origins of Western Christian Missions to the Muslims', in Muslim World, 55, 1965, page 324.
167. EULOGIUS, Memorialis Sanctorum, II, page 10; cited in CUTLER, A., op.cit., page 324.
168. EULOGIUS, op.cit., page 2; cited in CUTLER, A., op.cit., page 325.
169. See ALBAR, Vita Eulogu, chapters 4 - 5; cited in WALTZ, J., op.cit., page 228.
170. KERR, D.A., 'The Prophet Muhammad in Christian Theological Perspective', in Discussion Paper, 2, Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian - Muslim Relations, Birmingham, 1982, page 4.

171. See, for example, YOUNG, E.J., A Commentary on Daniel. 1st published, 1949; 1st British edn., Banner of Truth Trust, London, 1972, pages 141 - 164.
172. See YOUNG, E.J., op.cit., page 159 ff.
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174. YOUNG, F., 'A Cloud of Witnesses', in HICK, J., (ed.), The Myth of God Incarnate. S.C.M. Press, London, 1977, pages 36 - 37.
175. Alvarus, Vita Eulogu, 4 - 5, page 13; cited in CUTLER, A., op.cit., page 326.
176. See CUTLER, A., op.cit., page 332.
177. ECI, Vol. I, page 59.
178. WALTZ, J., op.cit., page 236; see also, KERR, D.A., op.cit., page 4.
179. MIGNE, op.cit., 105, col. 713; cited in ECI, Vol 2, page 18.
180. MIGNE, op.cit., 105, col. 753; cited in ECI, Vol. 2, page 18.
181. MIGNE, op.cit., 105, col. 776 - 777; cited in ECI, Vol. 2, page 18.
182. See IWI, page 5.
183. KHOURY, A.T., 'La controverse byzantine avec l'Islam', in Foi et Vie, I, 1969, page 26.

184. MIGNE, op.cit., 110, col. 869, 872 - 873; cited in ECI, Vol 2, page 19.
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187. FREEMON, F.R., op cit., page 425.
188. MPS, page 19; N.B. it is a misconception to suggest that epilepsy leads to brain deterioration; see FREEMON, F.R., op.cit., page 426.
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190. See Luke 8: 29; 11: 24.
191. See IWI, pages 320 - 322.
192. ibid., page 321.
193. sūrah 2: 223.
194. AQ, page 90, note 249.
195. Apparently a mistake for Zaynab.
196. ECI, Vol I, page 84.
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200. RUNCIMAN, S., A History of the Crusades, 3 vols. Harmondsworth, Penguin, Middlesex, 1965, vol. 3, page 480.

201. See, also, Bishops, 'Christians in North-Africa: the meaning of our encounters with Muslims', (Pastoral Letter), in Encounter, 73 - 74, 1981, page 24.

202. DUNLOP, D.M., 'A Christian Mission to Muslim Spain in the 11th Century', in Al-Andalus, 17, 1952, pages 259 - 310.

203. See WALTZ, J., op.cit., page 183; the letter in question may have been edited by Muslims, or, in the opinion of some scholars, written by a Muslim; see Turki, A., 'La Lettre du 'Moine de France' a al - Muqtadir billāh, roi de Sarragosse, et la reponse d'Al-Bāḡī, le fāqih andalou', in Al-Andalus, 31, 1966, pages 75 - 83. In any case, the said letter probably accurately reflects Christian responses to Muḥammad during the period under review.

204. KRITZECK, J., Peter the Venerable and Islam. Princeton University Press, 1964, page 64. Hereafter PVI.

205. Peter the Venerable, Contra Sectam Saracenorum, II, page 3; cited in IWI, pages 17 - 18.

206. Peter the Venerable, op.cit., I, page 16; cited in IWI, page 68.

207. See HESCHEL, A.J., The Prophets, 2 vols. Harper and Row, New York, 1962, vol. 1, pages 3 - 26.
208. PVI, page 220.
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210. PVI, page 291.
211. PVI, page 47.
212. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Contra Gentiles, I, page 6; cited in WALTZ, J., 'Muhammad and the Muslims in St. Thomas Aquinas', in Muslim World, 66, 1976, pages 81 - 95.
213. See TABARĪ, (al), 'Alī b. Rabbān, The Book of Religion and Empire. Trans., Mingana, A., Longmans-Green, Manchester, 1922, pages 153 - 157.
214. ECI, Vol. I, page 143.
215. The First Rule (1221) ch. 16; cited in ECI, Vol I, page 152.
216. VON DER BURG, J.J., 'Beati Patris Francisci Assisiatis', in Opera Omnia, Heberle, Köln, 1849, page 123.
217. RICHARD, J., La Papauté et les Missions d'Orient au Moyen Age. Ecole Francaise de Rome, 1977, page 38.
218. ZWEMER, S.M., 'Francis of Assisi and Islam' (1182? - 1226), in Muslim World 39, 1949, page 250.
219. See PEERS, E.A., Ramon Lull : A Biography. S.P.C.K., London, 1929, pages XV - XVI. Hereafter RLB.
220. RLB, page 93.

221. RLB, page 94.
222. RLB, page 95.
223. RLB, page 242.
224. RLB, page 329.
225. Hesychasm was a movement which specialised in the art of mystical prayer.
226. See SAHAS, D.J., 'Captivity and Dialogue: Gregory Palamas (1296 - 1360) and the Muslims', in The Greek Orthodox Theological Review, 25, 1980, page 411.
227. ibid., page 414.
228. ibid., page 422.
229. ibid., pages 426 - 427.
230. ibid., pages 428 - 429.
231. See The Book of Joshua, chs. 1 - 24;
The Book of Judges, chs. 1 - 21.
232. WYCLIF, J., De Fide Catholica (Opera Minora), page 112; cited in SOUTHERN, R.W., Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages. Cambridge, Mass., 1962, page 82.
233. KERR, D.A., 'The Prophet Muḥammad in Christian Theological Perspective', in Discussion Paper, 2, Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations, Birmingham, 1982, page 4.
234. WOLKAN, R., (ed.), Der Briefwechsel des Eneas Sylvius Piccolomini. Vienna, 1918, pages 199 - 202; cited in

BIECHLER, J.E., 'Christian humanism confronts Islam: sifting the Qur'ān with Nicholas of Cusa', in Journal of Ecumenical Studies, 13, 1976, page 3.

235. This translation is no longer extant.

236. Nicholas of Cusa, Cribratio, in Wilpert, P., (ed.), The Cribratio, Strasburg edn., 1488; repr., Berlin, 1966 - 67; cited in BIECHLER, J.E., 'Nicholas of Cusa and Muhammad: a fifteenth - century encounter', in Downside Review, 101, 1983, page 54.

237. *ibid.*, page 54.

238. Nicholas of Cusa, De pace fidei, Vol 7, in KLIBANSKY, R., and BASCOUR, H., (eds)., Hamburg, 1959; repr., 1970; cited in BIECHLER, J.E., 'Nicholas of Cusa and Muhammed: a fifteenth-century encounter', in Downside Review, 101, 1983, page 55.

239. *ibid.*, page 55.

240. *ibid.*, page 54.

241. *ibid.*, page 55.

242. *ibid.*, page 55.

243. *ibid.*, pages 55 - 58.

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16. Mark 6:3; also, Matthew 11:6. In a bid to maintain the notion of the virginity of Mary, conservative Christian theologians have interpreted 'brothers' and 'sisters' as 'cousins'. Hebrew and Aramaic have no specific term to denote a distant degree of relationship, and occasionally the word 'brother' can be used for it. Yet, in the New Testament there are no clear examples of Adelphoi as 'cousins'. See RUETHER, R., 'The Brothers of Jesus and the Virginity of Mary', in Continuum, 7, 1969, pages 93 - 105.
17. Mark 6:3.
18. See JTJ, pages 21 - 22.
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24. Exodus 6:2.
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28. sūrah 3: 18.
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30. sūrahs 3:180; 15:23; 19:40; 22:65.
31. sūrahs 2:186; 34:50; 50:16; 56:85.
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35. See Second Kings 16:6, 25:25.
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 41. Hebrews 4:15.
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 49. See JTJ, page 134.
 50. JPG, page 42.
 51. JPG, page 43.
 52. See BORNKAMM, G., op.cit., page 172.
 53. See JTJ, pages 139 - 140.
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55. See MOULE, C.F.D., The Origin of Christology.
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56. Isaiah 42: 1 - 9; 49: 1 - 6; 50: 4 - 11; 52: 13 - 53:
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57. sūrahs 3:45; 4:157, 171, 172.
58. JCT, page 39.
59. MTC, pages 46 - 47.
60. sūrah 11:2; see also, sūrahs 12:108; 34:46 - 50.
61. Joshua 24:3.
62. Acts 13:26.
63. JPG, page 68.
64. Mark 1:15.
65. See AQ, page 1205, note 4358.
66. UDN, page 15.
67. sūrahs 5:39; 25:70; 40:7.
68. Luke 15:11 ff.
69. sūrah 9:118; also, in the Old Testament God is said to
repent. See Genesis 6:6; Exodus 32:14; Judges 2:18;
Psalm 90:13; Joel 2:13; Jeremiah 18:8.
70. sūrah 10:107.
71. Matthew 20:1 ff.

72. Mark 2: 5 - 12.
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74. Daniel ch. 4.
75. JTJ, page 68.
76. Psalm 8:4; Ezekiel 11:2.
77. See DUNN, J.D.G., 'Was Christianity a monotheistic faith from the beginning?', in Scottish Journal of Theology, 35, 1982, page 315.
78. Daniel 7: 13 - 14; First Enoch 46; 62.
79. Mark 8:31.
80. Luke 7: 36 - 50.
81. Luke 7: 47 - 50.
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92. Matthew 11: 9 - 11.
93. Mark 1:2.
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96. JTJ, page 211.
97. BORNKAMM, G., op.cit., page 173.
98. Genesis 5:32; 15:3; First Kings 20:35; Zechariah 4:14.
99. Matthew 9:15; 12:27; Acts 13:26; Galatians 3:7.
100. CTM, page 262.
101. JME, page 290.
102. Mark 12: 1 - 9.
103. Isaiah 5: 1 - 7.

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105. sūrah 3:183.
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107. CTM, page 270.
108. CTM, page 271.
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110. Logos, a common Greek word, carries a large number of different meanings. Its basic translation is 'word', i.e. meaningful utterance, whence develop its many senses 'statement, declaration, discourse, subject-matter, doctrine, affair' and, by another development, 'reason, cause, sake, respect'. See Fourth Gospel 1:1, 14.
111. CONZELMANN, H., op.cit., page 336.
112. Fourth Gospel 8:42; 16:23.
113. Fourth Gospel 14:9; also, 10:30.
114. sūrah 3:39.
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132. sūrah 7:158; see also, sūrahs 4:79; 14:1; 16:44; 21:107; 25:1; 34:28; 36:68,69; 38:88; 39:41; 68:52; 81:27.
133. sūrah 9:33.
134. sūrah 14:4; see also, sūrahs 41:3; 42:7.
135. sūrah 5:92; see also, sūrahs 3:32; 4:59; 7:158; 9:71, 91; 48:9; 49:15; 58:4; 60:12; 64:8.
136. sūrah 3:31.
137. sūrah 68: 3 - 4.
138. sūrah 25:1.
139. sūrahs 5:99; 16:82; 24:54; 36:17; 42:48; 64:12; 72:23.
140. sūrahs 7:184, 188; 25:1, 56; 34:46; 35:23,24; 67:26; 79:45.
141. sūrahs 2:119; 6:4, 8; 7:188; 34:28.
142. sūrah 33:46.
143. sūrah 11:49.
144. sūrah 41:43; also, sūrah 35:24. If we accept that, prior to the advent of Muḥammad, Hūd was a prophet to the Arab tribe 'Ād (7:65), and Ṣāliḥ was a prophet to the Arab tribe Thamūd (7:73); then can we maintain that Muḥammad was the first prophet to the Arabs?
145. sūrah 46:9.
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